



BYWAYS IN
SOUTHERN TUSCANY



Lucignano. Porta San Giusto.

BYWAYS *in* SOUTHERN TUSCANY

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"WAYFARERS IN ITALY"



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PREFACE



THOSE who have known Italy longest and loved her best hold that her interest and beauty are inexhaustible, and, no matter how fondly the wanderer has explored, how sympathetically he has lingered to listen and to look, there is never an end to discovery. Therefore, there will never be an end to the making of books about her.

This one deals with southern Tuscany, a little country, but with a great history; a region not so striking to the casual eye as some more frequented ones, but with an absorbing fascination for those who try to penetrate its reticence.

For the traveler who has this end in view, Siena is naturally the beautiful and comfortable base from which to make explorations—to set forth from, to return to, to rest in—offering the knowledge and the means of travel by which this territory may best be seen. No gate of hers but opens toward some new loveliness, some avenue of country beauty, some point of history and romance; and the humble dwellers along the way, cheerful and helpful, both welcome the traveler and speed him on his way. I have purposely dwelt more at length upon those places that have been least written about in English and briefly on those that others have already described.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that spring and autumn are the seasons for the Rambler here. The winter is too rigorous and the summer too hot and both should be avoided.

PREFACE

There is a system of automobile-diligences that connect the towns, but it must be confessed that they move with a rapidity that leaves little opportunity for observation. Private conveyances may be had in Siena and, with frequent stops and repeated adjurations to the driver, whose idea of pleasing patrons is to carry them still faster than the public motors, one may at least form a superficial acquaintance with the country, in which the excellent maps of the Italian Touring Club will prove an invaluable assistance.



CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
<i>San Galgano, Chiusidino, Massa Marittima, Roccatoderighi</i>	3
CHAPTER II	
<i>Roccastrada, Castello di Pietra, The Legend of Pia dei Tolomei, The Maremma and Grosseto, Vetulonia, Castiglione della Pescaja</i>	22
CHAPTER III	
<i>The Legend of Bella Marsilia, Talamone, Albegna, Orbetello</i>	36
CHAPTER IV	
<i>Tiburzi the Brigand</i>	52
CHAPTER V	
<i>Magliano, Pereta, Scansano, Roccalbegna, Rocchette di Fazio, Campagnatico, Paganico</i>	65
CHAPTER VI	
<i>Montalcino I</i>	95
CHAPTER VII	
<i>Montalcino II</i>	107
CHAPTER VIII	
<i>The Val d'Orcia, Radicofani, The Legend of Re Giannino</i>	121
CHAPTER IX	
<i>San Salvatore, Piancastagnajo, The Legend of "The Little Hebrew," Santa Fiora</i>	141
CHAPTER X	
<i>Arcidosso, Triana</i>	158
CHAPTER XI	
<i>The Merse, Rapolano</i>	172

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER XII	
<i>Lucignano, Marciano, Torrita, Montichiello, Chianciano, Chiusi, Sarteano</i>	187
CHAPTER XIII	
<i>Cetona, Badia a Spineta, San Giovanni d'Asso, Montefollonico, Montisi</i>	215
CHAPTER XIV	
<i>Montelivère, Trequanda, Manciano, Montemerano, Saturnia, Sovana</i>	- 229
CHAPTER XV	
<i>Pitigliano</i> - - - - -	- 252
CHAPTER XVI	
<i>Sorano</i> - - - - -	- 276



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ILLUSTRATIONS

[FULL PAGE]

Lucignano. Porta San Giusto	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
										FACING PAGE
San Galgano	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Chiusidino	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Massa Marittima. The Castle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Roccatederighi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
Roccastrada	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
Castello di Pietra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
Castiglione della Pescaja	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32
A Farm House	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
Magliano. Piazza San Martino	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58
Magliano. The Town Wall	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	66
Pereta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70
Roccalbegna	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	74
Roccalbegna. The Castle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78
Rocchette di Fazio	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80
Istia d'Ombrone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	82
Paganico. Porta Gorella	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	84
Paganico	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	92
San Antimo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	96
Montalcino. The Osservanza	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Montalcino. The Castle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	108
A Farm House near Montalcino	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	112
Rôcca d'Orcia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	122
Ripa d'Orcia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	124
Campiglia d'Orcia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	128
Spedaletto	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	130

ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
Radicofani. A Fountain in the Town - - - - -	134
Radicofani. Ruins of the Fortress - - - - -	138
Monte Amiata - - - - -	142
Piancastagnajo. The Fortress - - - - -	146
Arcidosso. Town and Castle - - - - -	158
Triana - - - - -	160
A Villa in Val di Merse - - - - -	176
Lucignano. Porta San Giovanni - - - - -	192
Marciano. The Castle - - - - -	194
Torrta. Porta Gavina - - - - -	196
Massaini - - - - -	204
A Street in Montichiello - - - - -	206
Chianciano. A Street - - - - -	208
Sarteano Castle. The Drawbridge - - - - -	210
Cetona - - - - -	216
Cetona. Castle Tower - - - - -	218
Badia a Spineta - - - - -	220
San Giovanni d'Asso. Church of San Pietro in Villore - - - - -	222
Montefollonico - - - - -	224
Montisi - - - - -	226
Monteliffrè - - - - -	230
Monteliffrè. A Gateway - - - - -	234
Trequanda - - - - -	236
The Madonna of Montemerano - - - - -	238
Saturnia. Etruscan Gateway - - - - -	240
Sovana Castle (Suana) - - - - -	242
Pitigliano - - - - -	256
Pitigliano. The Aqueduct - - - - -	258
Pitigliano. In the Court of the Orsini Castle - - - - -	260
Pitigliano. Vicolo Venezia - - - - -	268
Pitigliano. Via Sovana - - - - -	270
Pitigliano. Porta Sovana - - - - -	272
Sorano - - - - -	276
Sorano, from the River - - - - -	278
Sorano. Portal of the Castle - - - - -	282

BYWAYS IN
SOUTHERN TUSCANY



MASSA MARITTIMA. THE UPPER TOWN

CHAPTER I

SAN GALGANO—CHIUSSIDINO—MASSA MARITTIMA—
ROCCATEDERIGHI



AMONG so many roads all beckoning toward differing delights in the corner of Tuscany lying before us to explore, it would be hard to choose but for the certainty that not one will be without its own charm and reward. Yet the first impulse is toward the west, the shore of the Tyrrhennian Sea, whither the imagination irresistibly flies because it is there that the Maremma lies, mysterious, forbidden land so long avoided by the stranger who, whatever his desire to enter it, seldom chose to pay the penalty too often exacted. It is not for beauty's sake that one is drawn toward it. Beauty is there for those who recognize it but it does not coerce the indifferent. Along that coast there are few salient features that suggest its unparalleled

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

history. It is memory and fancy that must deal with it and picture the march of the ages as they have passed over it and looked upon its strange, vivid blossomings, its lapses to decay and death and its final retrieval. So if we yield to its call we leave Siena by the Porta San Marco and take the highway that leads through Chiusidino and Massa Marittima toward the setting sun.

It is a country rich with cultivation. Vines and olives, olives and vines lie on either hand, and heights dark with ilex or green and gold with chestnuts, while the roadside is bordered with wild flowers, among which the poppy prevails and flaunts its glowing scarlet above the rest. We pass tiny villages and farm houses, there are small streams to cross and the River Merse which here turns and doubles upon itself keeps us company now and then in its windings. Before traveling far there is Montarrente, a small but fine old ruin on a slight eminence above the road, and a few miles beyond it we emerge from the hills at the edge of a level treeless meadow, and find ourselves opposite the noble remnant of the great monastery of San Galgano. There is no other such fine example of pure Gothic in all Italy as what remains standing of this church, nor perhaps anywhere in Tuscany an ecclesiastical establishment that has had a more august and typical history. Intimately connected with Siena, it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of their relation in an age when the Church was in its completest ascendancy. San Galgano became a widespreading estate of many activities and great wealth but with its gradual decay no evidence has been left of its numerous buildings excepting the lofty, roofless walls of the church. This is approached through the mud of an unclean farm yard, this stately ruin, worthy of a position peaceful and sequestered, but here treated with so little respect. With some indignation you wait while the *contadino*, who is the custodian, unlocks an iron



San Galgano.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

gate and you pass through and stand upon the turf which now covers the floor of the nave.

All that offended is now shut away and the dignity and solemnity of the place remind you that San Galgano is unconscious of the petty things outside its quiet walls and you feel only the pensiveness that comes with the contemplation of an exquisite thing that is gradually passing away. The empty circle of the great rose window, the shattered carving in the pointed arches, the broken capitals that enrich the pilasters, are not here draped with the graceful creepers that sometimes reconcile us to the decay they partly conceal, but they are not missed here for their absence allows one to study the grandeur of the architecture and the beauty of the detail.

The Cistercian monastery to which this church belonged was founded in the beginning of the thirteenth century by Ildebrando, Bishop of Volterra, one of the Pannocchieschi, a family famous in that region. The ground chosen was consecrated by the life of the hermit and saint, Galgano of Chiusidino. To this spot he is said to have fled from the luxurious and disorderly life of his youth, leaving behind him his family and his affianced bride. Here in the wilderness he struck his sword into the rock which received and clamped it, leaving the cross-shaped hilt upright that he might worship there. Hidden from his friends he bound himself to the ascetic life. He fed upon what fruits and roots he could gather in the woods about him, and soon came to be regarded as a holy man. In time his fame reached Chiusidino and his yearning mother hastened to find him, taking with her the girl he was to have married, clad in rich robes and adorned with jewels, that they might persuade him to renounce his determination and return with them to his home. It was all in vain; he reproved his mother and admonished his bride against all earthly love, and bidding them a final farewell turned from them to

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

resume his prayers. Such was the severity of his penance that he lived but a year longer. In the same century he was canonized and a few years later the monastery erected in his honor was begun.

Within sight of it the little town of Chiusidino lies, crowning the summit of a hill. She looks out upon as fine a horizon as any castello in the countryside, and can signal to her neighbors of Monticiano on the east and high Belforte on the north, and look down upon the Merse, not yet grown to the magnitude of a river as it flows below. Chiusidino is ill prepared to receive strangers and her small inn is not inviting, but one may lunch there well enough, and I was waited upon by a very small boy, who assuming a large white apron bravely carried himself with the air of a practised *cameriere*. When I issued forth to look for the chapel of San Galgano a comely young girl offered to show me the way. There are few villages so obscure that fashion does not reach them, so I was not much surprised to note her pretty violet gown, her broad lace collar, and the modish cut of her sleeves.

In a narrow rock-paved street we found the tiny chapel, but sadly decayed and dishonored, for until lately it has been used to stable goats in. The government has now catalogued its beautiful Sassetta altarpiece, yet it still remains in the mould and darkness of the closed chapel in a nearly ruined condition. The lovely madonna, the angels crowned with olive, the mellow color of rich fabrics, shine out of the obscurity of their wretched housing and make the beholder feel the neglect of such a picture intolerable.

We walked away and threaded the streets of the village. There are no architectural attractions, and it cannot be denied that there is a general lack of cleanliness, but presently we came out upon a northern rampart and looked beyond our immediate surroundings. This was the moment in which to praise the view and the fine air.



Chiusidino.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

"*Bella veduta, buon' aria!*" always elicits an enthusiastic response and a glow of happy local pride, and for the rest I did not wonder that the place was not cleaner when I learned of the scant water supply, and noticed the long and steep descent to the well where washing is carried on, as I passed it when, a little later in the day, I resumed my journey toward Massa Marittima.

The way lies through wooded hills and under cliffs overhung by robust shrubs, with here and there a high-perched village like Bocchegiano or Prata, and past some of the mines that made Massa rich. The women we encountered now and again by the wayside follow a stern fashion in dress that places them at a hopeless disadvantage in regard to good looks. Young and old wear a stiff kerchief covering the head and tied under the chin, and surmounting this a man's felt hat. Beauty can hardly triumph over such a handicap, but an immemorial fashion is not to be lightly discarded in Tuscany, and doubtless it does not conceal bright eyes and rosy cheeks from those who have an eye for them.

In time one feels the salt air from the west, and the road begins to climb the flank of a fine spur thirteen hundred feet high, that outpost of the mountains upon which Massa sits. It is a glorious position; on three sides the land drops away from it, and the city surmounts the top, covering it in two quite distinct benches which hold the upper and lower town, as they are called. From its commanding ridge it looks out to the south and west over undulating foothills and thence across the flat plain of the Maremma to the sea, and if it is clear the blue outline of the Island of Elba may be discerned.

Having reached the lower town one proceeds along the principal street to turn in at the Locanda Benini, a tolerable inn presided over by a big, handsome landlady, whose coral beads become her mightily.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Further exploration shows that this street ends in a fine triangular piazza where are the communal buildings and the beautiful cathedral. The last-named stands a little above the level of the others, and you mount to it by broad stone steps, accommodated to its outline in such a manner as to give the effect of a fitting pedestal. The arcaded façade, the slender tower with its grouped windows, the dome, are all dignified and harmonious, and the position of the building, resting as it does upon the outer edge of the town and not crowded against by other structures, gives every advantage in viewing it. The interior is full of interest: at the entrance are two columns and two pilasters of travertine, for some reason left free of the flat whitewash that covers all the rest. The sacristan declares that this disfigurement is soon to be removed. Upon the walls are various archaic reliefs, and, besides a very fine baptismal font of the thirteenth century, covered with Byzantine carving, there is the sarcophagus of the saint to whom the cathedral is dedicated, called the House of San Cerbone, much enriched with deeply cut panels. Over a doorway the life of the saint is portrayed; especially spirited is the march of the geese who are said to have accompanied him by his own order when he went to Rome, that he might not appear empty-handed before the Pope. From the window of the sacristy there is a charming view.

Opposite the Cathedral is the Palazzo del Podestà, very solid and quite unornamented but for the beauty of its Gothic windows. Of these the ones of the upper row retain their original form, but from those of the lower line the mullions have been ruthlessly sawed, and square, shuttered openings fitted in. The Palazzo Communale close by soars to a great height and terminates in square battlements, while its windows have been left unspoiled. Quite marked upon its façade are the small bracketed apertures, to be

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



MASSA MARITTIMA. THE CATHEDRAL

seen also on other Tuscan palaces, whose principal service was to hold the supports for temporary platforms, from which soldiers could fight in time of attack by enemies from without or rebels from within. There is other interesting architecture in Massa, rich color of walls and beauty of ornament, and there are many beguiling turns and nooks. I was glad to find in a sequestered garden-spot a rustic theatre dedicated to Felice Cavalotti, and I hope his charming and witty comedies are often given there.

Few towns have had a more agitated history, but beyond certain warlike reminders, its air to-day is remarkably peaceful. It is uncommonly clean for one thing, and the people are courteous and helpful to strangers. Who but an Italian gentleman, taking note of the interest of a foreigner lingering near his home, would invite her into his house and, introducing her to his wife, convey her through the pleasant rooms of his dwelling to reach a

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

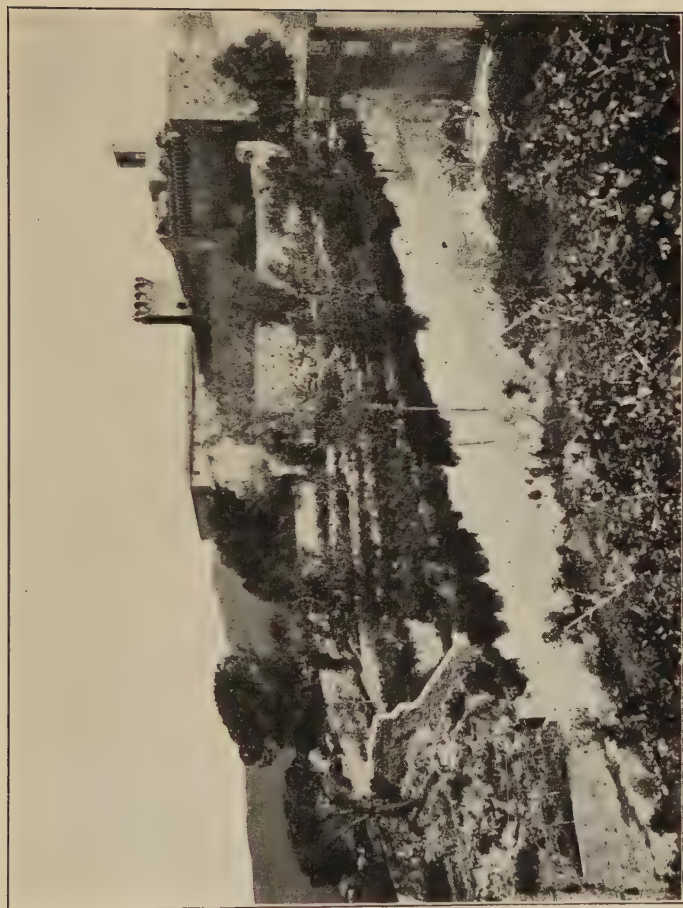
balcony where the best view of the surroundings could be had? Yet this may happen in Massa. The kindest hospitalities seem to be the natural expression of this people. Strolling through the streets one comes here and there upon the sacred initials with which Saint Brandano signed his presence all over Italy, greatest saint of the fifteenth century he has been called. Born in dark days of hatred and violence, he everywhere preached fervently against vice, and urged peace and reconciliation throughout the land, with a flaming zeal that reached the hearts and consciences, not only of the humble, but of those in high places, and wrought marvels during the forty years of his labors.

There is a pretty story concerning the origin of the divine monogram, which says that a maker of dice came to him one day and remonstrated against his exhortations.

"You pity the poor," he said, "but what is that to us if you take away our living? The people no longer buy my wares."

The saint looked at him smiling, and presently traced for him the letters I. H. S., bidding him cast aside his wicked trade and, instead, inscribe the holy letters upon small panels and sell them in place of those incitements to an evil life by which he had hitherto made his living. This the man did and prospered thereby.

There are two ways of ascending to the upper town of Massa; the more direct one is of greater steepness, but there is a second, mounting by a gradual slope on the west side. At the top is the vast fortress, built in 1337 by Siena to secure her sovereignty over the city. In spite of the fact that in the eighteenth century a large part of it was torn down, the castle is still a great and impressive one. Its widespread remains both frame and crown the height. The long, irregular lines of wall with their corbelled *archetti* are shadowed at intervals by shrubs that spring



Massa Marittima. The Castle.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

luxuriantly from their foundations, the high arched gateways, the massive towers, show time-abraded surfaces where small plants spring from crevices or ivy drops a verdant curtain, and the whole forms a picturesque and beautiful survival of the mediæval time. Two things that belong to a much earlier period remain. A tower of quite incredible height once rose from this summit, the pride of the people, who called it the Candlestick. This belonged to the days when their warlike bishops ruled them, and the castle of these bishops stood there also. Both are now mere remnants, for the Sienese cut down the tower to suit the plan of their fortress, and the Bishop's Palace is so reduced as to be quite insignificant; and now the great enclosure holds the upper town with its streets and its more modern houses, and I fancy the thoughts of the busy population seldom dwell upon what happened in those early centuries of siege and slaughter.

It is hard to assign a date for the founding of these ancient hill towns, but we know that by the middle of the ninth century Pope Gregory IV had declared Massa a city and the seat of a bishop. The bishops of Massa thereafter flourished greatly; they were established in the upper town in a strong castle, Castello Monteregio, and governed the people as feudal princes. Besides privileges of temporal possession derived directly from the Pope, it had become a settled custom that wealthy transgressors might avoid penance and obtain absolution through gifts of value to the church, and thus lands, fortresses, and mines in the neighborhood of Massa came into the hands of her bishops. Early in her history Massa had become strangely divided, the upper town and the lower being as separated politically as they were naturally, the bishops, as we have said, ruling the rocky height above, while on the bench below the people endeavored to carry on the forms of a communal government. It was not, however, until early

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

in the thirteenth century that Massa was able to declare herself a republic. Being a sanguine people the poor Massetani on this happy occasion chose a lion rampant as emblem of the energy with which they intended to defend their liberties, the red ground on which he appeared indicating their Ghibelline sympathies, as it was the color of that party.

They were naturally a peaceful and industrious people, and with every respite which freedom from hostilities allowed them, hastened to till their fertile soil and operate their rich mines, so that at this period they prospered and became of importance among their sister commonwealths, in spite of the fact that in common with all such communities they were frequently embroiled with the feudal lords about them, of whom the Pannocchieschi, the Ardengheschi, and the Aldobrandeschi, great nobles of the Maremma, were the most powerful, and in all Italy none more lawless and unscrupulous could be found. The Pannocchieschi alone possessed twelve castles not far from the city. In these contests Massa like other places before her called upon neighboring republics for aid, and with the same disastrous results. Still for the time being she continued to grow and to hold her own, and the turbulent nobles began to realize there were advantages from such a course, and applied for citizenship in the town. This being granted, they began to build, each family its own palace within the walls, and in consequence there began a new series of misfortunes for Massa. Quarrels and intrigues of course grew hotter than ever, for in such close proximity the families inevitably fought, and they then proceeded to ally themselves now with this power and now with that, of those who had already been appealed to formerly by Massa herself. Some of these ungovernable newcomers had established themselves in the upper town, some in the lower, and strange combinations resulted; so that at one time the

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Pannocchieschi who had built in the upper town were actually leagued with Siena, while the lower town was supported by Pisa.

Having invited disorder to take up its abode with her, and torn within as well as assailed from without, Massa from being a rich community began to suffer from the dislocation of all her industries. Her lands were devastated, her fields were untilled, her mines unworked, while the poison of the deteriorating Maremma had begun to undermine the strength of her people. Siena, looking on, did not fail to remind her of what value she might be as a permanent protector, bringing security and tranquility to the distressed republic. At last the heads of the upper and lower towns came together in the Cathedral and agreed to settle their differences, to forget the injuries, robberies, and homicides of the past, and swear to a peace which should endure to the end of time. Following this it was decided to accept the protection of Siena, the more so that they lay under certain pecuniary obligations to that city, and Siena on her side made the most flattering and affectionate promises of aid and support. With mutual courtesies and congratulations the alliance was cemented, and the Massetani drew a long breath and looked forward to the enjoyment of that perpetual peace just secured to them under the benevolent guardianship of a powerful friend.

Scarcely was Siena in command than, to the dismay of the people of Massa, she began to build a huge fortress in the upper town, calling upon the citizens themselves for great sums of money to be used for its construction. Comprehending the menace of this, and reduced to desperation, they combined in a widespread conspiracy to drive the Sienese from the city, but before their plans were completed they were betrayed by certain of their own number and their leaders carried off to Siena, where two of them were beheaded and the rest condemned to prison or

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

exile. Work upon the fortress then went on as before, and was so urgently pressed that within a year it was completed.

The independence of Massa was now gone, the decreased population suffered under intolerable taxation, and the plague of 1348 came to further enfeeble them. One wonders that any spirit of defiance survived in a people so oppressed, but agreeing together that it was better to die in arms than to drag on an existence so miserable, they rose once more against Siena, drove out her *podestà*, and attacked her fortress on the hill. This proved too strong to be taken by assault, and they began to burrow desperately under the foundations, in the hope of compassing its destruction in that way. At this, Siena, in alarm for her garrison, sent a force against them, and the miserable Massetani, broken in battle below the walls, saw their city entered by a pitiless soldiery who set fire where they could, and destroying and plundering as they went,



MASSA MARITTIMA. THE CASTLE

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

carried off with them whatever they could collect from a population already stricken with the direst poverty.

After this the despondent people seem not to have lifted their voices again for several years, excepting when they faintly supplicated Siena that the taxes they could not pay might be lightened. At the end of this unhappy century they were again visited by plague and famine, and in 1408 the lowest point was reached when Massa, hardly more than an empty shell, held but four hundred souls. The families of the nobles had withdrawn to live in Siena, and most of the humbler citizens, without occupation or resource, had gone to join the companies of mercenary soldiers whose bands ranged Italy at that period. The poor remnant became the prey of robbers, and Massa was threatened with complete depopulation.

During these years Siena herself had also suffered terribly from war, pestilence, and famine, and she now bethought herself that in her weakened condition the conciliation of even so feeble a tributary town as Massa might be expedient, and that unless it was succored it bade fair to be entirely abandoned. For this reason, "and not from generosity of soul," says Dr. Luigi Petrocchi (the loyal historian of the stricken city from whose volume I have drawn many of the facts for this sketch), she began to study the means for ameliorating conditions, to the end that Massa should be gradually repopulated. In fact, with encouragement and exemption from certain taxes the number of inhabitants slowly increased during the remainder of the century. We will hope that for that time Massa enjoyed some measure of relief and tranquillity even though it was not to last, for in 1552 the plague again stalked through the land and left behind it complete desolation. Uncultivated, undrained, roamed over by wild beasts, there was hardly the possibility of rehabilitation. In this extremity the people of Massa and other

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

villages in the vicinity, such as Chiusidino, Roccatederighi, and Roccastrada actually united in forming an association for protection against wolves. These animals had become so bold as to enter towns in the night and attack any who had unwarily lain down to sleep in the piazzas or doorways. It was agreed that a generous bounty should be offered for all wolves killed and brought in to the authorities.

The time during which Massa Marittima can be said to have a separate history now draws to a close, though she was yet to undergo the horrors of another siege and a renewed attack of the plague; but her fortunes had long been indissolubly joined to those of Siena, and by the middle of the sixteenth century she passed into the hands of Cosimo dei Medici.

A tragic story this, dwelling, as seems inevitable in any brief recital, more upon crimes, catastrophes, and wars than upon the long, recuperative intervals when life went on more normally, children were born and grew up to fill the gaps in the population, and fields were sown and harvested. Massa having lived through it all is now a pleasant, orderly town, full of a busy, cheerful coming and going, and with a general air of thrift.

While sitting in the dimly-lighted Benini dining-room on the evening of my arrival, a subdued noise as of many voices and many footsteps reached my ears, and minute by minute increased in volume. Dinner being over, I sought a window from which to look down upon the street, and found that the whole population seemed to be collected there, filling the narrow thoroughfare from side to side.

It was not a stationary crowd, however, but a slowly moving procession, for men and women, girls and boys, were walking steadily at a moderate pace, seemingly fixed by common consent. Complete decorum was maintained; there was no hurrying nor any attempt of the



Roccatederighi.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

impatient, if there were any such, to push past those in front, and as they walked they talked; there was no loud laughter, no vociferous tone, no rising to a higher pitch in order to talk down a companion. It was in fact a sort of ambulatory *conversazione* of the most amicable kind. The streets of many Italian towns are populous at night, but anything quite like the serious unanimity of Massa I had not before encountered. It pleased me and I watched it for some time. I soon observed that the same groups and couples continually reappeared, and this showed that having passed to a certain point on this principal street, they crossed into a parallel one by which they returned, to emerge again upon the main thoroughfare. I also noted that they were dressed for this social ceremony with a certain smartness, and altogether it impressed me as a felicitous and civilized custom that spoke well for the people of this comparatively isolated little city.

Since during a stay in Massa you ascend and descend the declivities and inclines of her streets, often standing still to gaze out from her mountain bastion, your eyes are continually drawn westward to rest upon those long smooth levels far below, that stretch away to the sea and join it so gently that hardly more than by the sparkling of the surface beyond do you define their line of meeting. It is there the Maremma lies and one day you set forth to reach it.

There is a direct road from Massa that sweeps down the mountain and out upon the plain, but, because by choosing a more deliberate approach we may visit certain little obscure places on the way, we turn for the moment to the northeast and climb to higher hills that are sometimes covered with a growth of brushwood, sometimes with groups of ilex and other trees. If it is spring, the white oaks are just coming into leaf; beneath them a sweet undergrowth of myrtle and rosemary breathes forth fragrance, and the slopes facing the southern sun are bright with

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

ranunculus and golden broom. Under the summits from which little fortified towns look down warily there are patches of cultivation, and the Maremman oxen, whose huge horns are so threatening and whose eyes are so mild, move slowly along the road, carrying the farm products of the neighborhood.

At last, set on high, there comes into sight a saw-toothed ridge of trachyte rock, where splinters and wedges of stone and stony little houses shoulder each other in silhouette against the sky until the rocks carry the day and pitch downward obliquely to a wall of cliffs at whose base lie thick woods. Where the village clings, two slim towers rise against the sky, the whole a wondrous pictorial thing that seems to belong purely to the land of romance. Only in a country where nearly every height that commanded a road was fortified could it have been thought possible to



ROCCATERIGHI

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

perch a town on such a blade as this. Roccatederighi it is called, and there is no doubt that much romance of a fierce kind entered into its agitated history, beginning with the somewhat shadowy family of the Tederighi, feudatories of Siena, who gave it its name.

Toward the close of the fourteenth century Siena was suffering intolerably from the rivalry of her two most powerful families, the Salimbeni and Tolomei. There was perpetual fighting between them; and the city, powerless to exert control, was filled with tumult and bloodshed.

It is said that there is no hatred to be compared in ferocity with mediæval hatreds, and if ever the saying had verification, it was during such enmities as these where children hardly old enough to lisp the oath were sworn to carry on the blood-feuds of the family. Now and then, when turmoil and wholesale slaughter became an unendurable scandal, the church interfered and forced the heads of warring parties to meet in the cathedral and pledge themselves to peace and reconciliation upon the altar, but hardly had they left the threshold of the sanctuary ere the struggle recommenced and their false oaths were flung to the winds.

In the Sienese revolutions of 1368 the Salimbeni became for a time all-powerful in the state, and Francesco, most prepotent of the family, forced the republic to give into his hands, for himself and his heirs, Roccatederighi and five other castles of the *contado*. In those days small towns must have been quite inured to being tossed like a ball from the hand of one irresponsible owner to another, but on this occasion, Francesco did not remain long in peaceful possession of his castles, for the fortunes of his family went down in the next Sienese revolution, and, his life being in danger, he was obliged for the time to fly from the city. He was next ordered to surrender his castles, but this he refused, and, diligently strengthening their fortifications,

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

he prepared to defend them against any assault. As Siena was too occupied with her internal dissensions to lay siege to a group of castles, she suggested arbitrating the matter. This gave the Salimbeni the opportunity to hinder proceedings and demur at judgments, so that affairs dragged on and Francesco was able to return to Siena.

With the aid of other disaffected nobles, the Salimbeni formed a new conspiracy to overturn the government, and in the struggle which ensued, Francesco was mortally wounded and died a few hours after. It was this Francesco who was the father of the lovely Cangenova, whose unhappy love for Ipolito Tolomei, the enemy of her house, forms the subject of one of Bargagli's best known and most touching stories.

After the death of Francesco, the fate of Roccatederighi was no less unhappy than before, until at last the people made a bargain with Siena to give themselves back to her, in return for which she was to rid them of the claims of the Salimbeni and all other such gentry, absolve them from any offences they might be considered to have committed, and remit their taxes for ten years. This being a cheap price to pay for the return of a valuable fortress, Siena agreed, generously making them a present of all the belongings of Francesco now within their walls and permitting the citizens of Roccatederighi to keep their own pasturage and the acorn crop.

Such is an outline of the vicissitudes which this little town experienced during the tumultuous fifteenth century, but when, in the following one, it passed with Siena into the possession of Cosimo dei Medici, its importance vanished and its remote situation caused it to lie forgotten and neglected for many a generation. Its walls and dwellings fell into decay, and whatever distinction it may have boasted in beauty of palace or dignity of castle, nothing has

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

survived. It has an incomparable site for defence, but the fortress that once stood there has shrunk to a contracted huddle of walls, contrasting sadly with a too sleekly restored tower. In the town below it the streets are respectably clean and climb over their irregularities by means of steps hewn out of the rock on which the town is founded; but the peasantry who populate it have a certain air of ease and unconcern and the children are unusually well shod. I noticed that some of the children used French phrases, which at once awakened curiosity.

A little talk with some of the leisurely inhabitants disclosed the fact that their industry is quite specialized. The majority of the men leave their village for five months in the year and go to work in France. They are able to secure very cheap traveling rates by water from Italy, going in parties of four or more. Once there, they secure employment in roadmaking and earn good wages, bringing home with them at the end of the season upward of five hundred lire. In a short time a laborer is able to lease a "house," that is, two or three rooms in one of the plain, solid buildings thus divided for the use of many families. This accomplished, he secures a scrap of ground on which to cultivate tomatoes, and space for the accommodation of a pig, an important adjunct. He is now established as a *pigionale* or renter, that is, a solid householder, and with his modest wants, can spend the rest of the year without working.





ORBETELLO. THE LOOKOUT

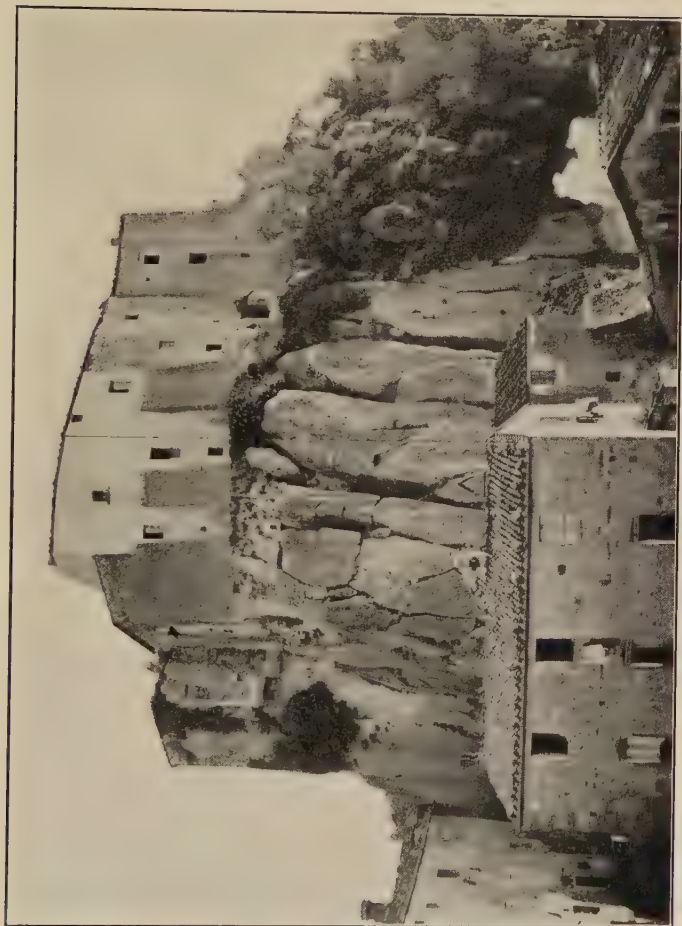
CHAPTER II

ROCCASTRADA—CASTELLO DI PIETRA, THE LEGEND OF
PIA DEI TOLOMEI—THE MAREMMA AND GROSSETO—
VETULONIA—CASTIGLIONE DELLA PESCAJA



NEXT on the road after Roccatederighi lies Roccastrada, and because of its name and its striking situation, as well as because it divided the day conveniently, we climbed to its piazza for a midday meal which one may find at the Stella d'Italia. Seen close at hand, the town is not prepossessing; on the contrary, it is undeniably dirty and is full of black *sotto* streets and breakneck stairs that lead up or down to forbidding doorways. Within obscure shops, the carpenter and blacksmith work in a darkness which leads one to the conclusions that they have developed eyes requiring no light. It is a stern place and a rough people.

There are few towns as remote and yet as old as this from which the evidences of antiquity have disappeared so completely, but of the reasons for this nothing is to be



Roccastrada.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

learned from the inhabitants. They do not remember that a castle ever existed on the rock above their heads; but we know that a strong one stood there long ago, belonging to the rebellious Counts of Santa Fiora from whom Siena took it in 1316. It had held out gallantly through many assaults, but at last the defenders were forced to capitulate, the victors agreeing to spare their lives, but reserving the right to destroy the fortifications. Whether or not they were thorough in their work, time has seconded it, for there is now no trace of wall or tower nor of any other survival of ancient architecture.

I was pondering on the austerity of it all, the absence of any softening element, when a ray of sunshine put me in the wrong; it suddenly visited something near by which I had not noticed and lighted it with loveliness. It was a head of wavy copper-colored hair I have seldom seen equalled, and it belonged to a smiling girl who hospitably invited me to follow her to her abode where I should be rewarded by a "*bella veduta*." I was glad to join her and we proceeded to mount innumerable flights of stairs, first the short and steep ones of the streets and then the longer ones inside the bleak walls where she had her bower. When we reached it, it proved to be a large, bare room, clean but sparsely furnished, and decorated with the usual lithograph of King Victor Emanuel. Through it we passed out upon a little terrace bounded by closely set flower pots, which commanded all the beauty of a prospect the châtelaine of a costly villa might have coveted.

Far above the unclean streets and harsh walls we stood, as though upon the prow of a ship borne gently upon a sea of spring verdure; a light breeze blew about us and we looked far out over wave after wave of rolling hills to a faintly blue horizon. My pretty companion felt the charm of her rare outlook and blushed with pleasure that it received the tribute which she knew it deserved. She swept

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

it with her eyes and pointed out the directions of places she knew by name but had never visited. The world of her daily existence was small, but the horizon and the sky belonged to her. While we chatted, she gathered a few blossoms from her precious flower pots and gave them to me as we parted.

From Roccastrada a lonely by-road with many turnings carries one to the forgotten ruins of Castello di Pietra. At one of these turnings Montemassi suddenly appears, a fortress very important in its day, but at present represented only by two ruined towers and a few houses fitting like a cap to the peak of its conical hill.

Otherwise the way leads among uninhabited hills and ravines till emerging suddenly upon the edge of a level stretch, the storied castle comes into view, outlined against the sky on a steep eminence to the west. At first one looks in vain for the melancholy gloom in which tradition envelops it, and the imagination must reconstruct the surroundings that in early times gave it that character. The level plain it overlooks bounded by steep hills was once a fever-stricken morass, the hills were dark with an impenetrable growth, fiend-haunted woods to the superstitious, the heavy building on the hill was a symbol of tyranny and the seat of a story of cruelty and death.

It was less of an effort to recall this when I made my first visit on a murky evening in November, with a chill in the air, and the grayness of low-lying clouds imparting itself to the whole landscape. I approached it too from the barren side of the spur on which the ruins of the castello brood. Returning to it in May showed a differently lighted picture. This time I took the longer walk, zigzagging up as beautiful a wooded slope as I have ever seen. At the foot of it ran the canal that had drained the valley and made of its pestilent marsh a space of cultivated land. Along its

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



CASTELLO DI PIETRA. THE ROUND TOWER

banks grew masses of succulent water-plants and tufts of yellow iris. As for the pathway, it led between all manner of verdant shrubs, the cistus was starred with white, and the wild rose had already flung out sprays of pink, while cyclamen and daisies peeped from the ground below. It was all too beguiling for haste, and there was time to linger, but at last the top was reached and one entered the boundary of the castle. It must have been of great extent; portions of the outer wall choked with weeds and brambles now showed only a little above the ground, but others rising aloft looked as solid yet as the eternal rocks. On the east out of a lichened buttress grows an old olive tree bravely putting forth its spring foliage, the stump of a ruined tower marks the northwestern corner, and at the northeast there is a steep drop to a lower level of walls.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Here is La Salta della Contessa, so called, The Countess' Leap.

The story of Pia dei Tolomei and Nello Pannocchieschi has been told once and forever in those five immortal lines in which Dante uttered it, and it may be that we should ask nothing more; yet it is impossible to prevent the fancy from playing about the mystery of that brief and piteous record, or to hinder the quickening of a desire to trace the story further and discover what history and tradition have to add. Various are the avenues one may follow in the differing versions, and indeed the very existence of Pia has been questioned, her youth, her beauty, her tragedy, denied; yet, in spite of all, belief in her lives, and among the peasantry of these valleys nothing shakes the conviction of her reality. This then is the story as it was related to me upon the spot.

The lady was young and lovely, no blame attached to her, the fate that befell her through her cruel husband was all undeserved. Her beauty tempted an unscrupulous noble, who essaying to make love to her was repulsed, and being an ignoble lover he was angered and determined to be revenged. The plot he concocted was nothing short of infernal; having discovered that the young Countess had a banished brother from whom she had been separated for many years, he employed a confederate and began to develop his scheme. Suspicion was craftily planted in the mind of the husband, nursed by the meaning glance, the hint, the sentence begun and broken off with excuses, and pained sympathy half expressed. These had their effect, the man became gloomy and uneasy; the young wife remained unaware and free of embarrassment. At last when the time was considered ripe and the husband's jealousy thoroughly aroused, he was invited to place himself in a certain window and watch for the appearance of his lady. Care was taken that the scene prepared for him should be set for the



Castello di Pietra.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

eye only, and far enough for the sound of the voice to be unheard. Meantime the gentle Pia was sought and was told that her long absent brother was returning, that he was even now close by and eager to greet her. Full of sisterly affection, she waited not for his coming but hastened forth to meet him. At the chosen spot the confederate, prepared in his part, met her with ardor, and with impulsive tenderness she threw herself into his arms.

It was enough, the husband was convinced, and before he met his returning wife his mind was made up. No explanation she could make was listened to, he was stone, he was ice. He carried her at once to his castle in the lonely Maremma and here, sitting silent, deaf to any appeal she could make, he waited till grief and the poison of that air should have their way with her. For one so helpless and so anguished death would not have tarried long, but a day came when in a sudden access of despair she flung herself from a window overlooking the steep below the castle, and they gathered up the lifeless body, safe from further torture, and carrying it in, laid it down before him whose need of waiting was now over. That window to this day has been known as The Countess' Leap.

Southward from Castello di Pietra the country road continues, following the little river Bruna among hills green with holm oaks and hedges threaded with wild spirea and white heather, from which one comes out upon the great plain of the Maremma. Once it was a series of pools and forests, and my friend, the Sienese, remembers when these woods were cut. It was done with haste and millions of birds and small animals were left homeless, and in their terror traversed long distances and even tried to take refuge in the homes of men, their natural enemies. Now the land lies cleared and level as a table, mostly under the plough excepting for an occasional group of cork oaks or a bit of unsubdued bog. On the east the plain is cut by

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

promontories that advance from the hill country, on the west it stretches away to the sea. The afternoon had waned, and in the obscurity of the advancing twilight its great expanse lay colorless and blank before me, and under the spell of memory it took on a tragic loneliness. For the moment it was not so much its ghostly feudal past which rose in the mind as the sorrows of those later humble folk of the Maremma such as figure in the heart-breaking little tales of Fucini and Palmieri, but the wanderers they describe have disappeared from the part of the plain I was crossing, and it lay boundless and silent, the long straight road tapering gradually in perspective and fading into the dusk.

It was quite dark before a cluster of twinkling lights shone out of the distance, and soon we entered the gateway of Grosseto, the largest town of southern Tuscany. It was a too abrupt change from limitless silent space under an unbroken dome of star-shot sky; one resented the sudden flare of street lamps and the clatter over stone pavements, and yet how easily one is mollified by the offer of ease, how weakly does one relax from austerity to accept creature comforts! Cleanliness, warmth, good food, they are not to be disparaged at the end of a long day of travel, and Grosseto possesses an excellent inn, the Hotel Bastiani, which has a peculiar value for the wanderer in a region as little known as this, since in it he may be housed contentedly while making it the centre of explorations in many directions; and the fact that it is an unhappily modernized town, prosperous but not interesting, does not stand in the way of its usefulness to the traveler pre-occupied with his own needs.

On the fine old brick rampart of Grosseto there is a little lookout from which you can scan the Maremma at its point of greatest breadth, and see the mountains and the littoral spread out before you. The Maremma, whose

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

musical name means the country that borders the sea, is considered by Repetti to begin at the mouth of the River Magra in the northern corner of the triangle of Tuscany and extend to its southern boundary. He is speaking of the Tuscan Maremma only, but the same low shore extends at least to Civitavecchia, and of this varied coastline the portion south of Campiglia Marittima has been considered the most deadly to man. Strange, mysterious region! No other has had a like history or passed through the same vicissitudes, the same disasters. It has been dwelt upon for two thousand years, it has seen the rise and fall of proudest civilizations, it has watched the sweeping hordes of barbaric invasion, it has fallen from populous fertility to fever-stricken solitude, and now at last is being returned to the use of man as a dwelling place.

Under the Etruscans it flourished greatly, wisdom and patience made of its rich soil a productive garden, for it was drained by a complete system of subterranean canals, the remains of which have been since discovered by excavations made in connection with the railways. The Romans continued its prosperity, then there swept down upon it the northern destroyers, and again and again it became with the rest of Italy a trampled, blood-soaked battlefield. Yet though so many times beaten down it as often raised its head. The surviving people, terrified and dejected, crept back, they rebuilt their ruined dwellings, they plowed their fire-blackened fields and resumed their laborious, uncertain lives again. In the eighth century the Greek pirates took part in its devastation, and in the tenth the Saracens, having taken Sardinia, so ravaged the opposite shore of Italy, burning and slaughtering as they conquered, that it became for a time virtually a wilderness; but even this was survived and up to the thirteenth century the Maremma was tolerably well populated and passable conditions existed.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Siena next helped to bring it low, for in her struggles to break up the great feudal holdings of such families as the Aldobrandeschi, the Pannocchieschi, the Visconti, the Ardengheschi, she destroyed the waterways, and this short-sighted policy encouraged the stealthy malaria that by degrees was subduing the country, and hastened its slow, unhappy decadence. As Siena came into possession she became in a manner the absentee landlord of a changing and diminishing population. The streams flowing through a too level land were choked, the depressions became noisome swamps, rank forests covered much of the plain as well as the hills, and, helping to make them impenetrable, parasitic growths flourished; everywhere spread the marruca, most vicious of plants, at each joint carrying a pair of thorns set in opposite directions so that, as the country people say, while one grasps the other pierces. Wild boars abounded, bands of cattle and horses, lapsed to wildness, galloped at will over the abandoned plains.

Only the names remained of shining villas and lordly castles, and the numbers of the peasantry who clung to the soil were thinned by malaria. In their ignorance regarding this unhappy disease conjecture dealt with its origin, and at one time many believed it to be caused by the breath of venomous snakes blowing across the sea from the opposite shore of Africa. This cannot but suggest a striking picture. We see lines of gigantic serpents, ranged upon the sands in a perspective of miles. They assume a uniform position resembling the letter S and alternately inhale in unison and in unison exhale sheets of fiery and poisonous vapor, directed against the shores of Italy. Proverbs of a forbidding character were common concerning the region, such as: "In the Maremma you grow rich in a year but you die in six months"; in fact, it was frequently referred to as a spot quite outside the bounds of the friendly earth, as when in Boccaccio's tale of the sixth day that pleasant fellow

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Scalza proves that a certain family has claim to be the oldest "in the world or in the Maremma."

Thus the poor Maremma languished for long and dreary centuries until that good Lorrainer, Leopold I, took it upon his heart and began its reclamation. All honor to him, for he accomplished what was possible at that time. For thirty years the work continued, portions of the soil were drained, charcoal burners and shepherds began to frequent it. In time, tempted by its fertility, tillers of the soil also came, venturing down to gather crops during the harvest season and returning to their homes, carrying their slender gains and too often also the seeds of the disease that gradually turned them bent and yellow. It is only within a few years that modern scientific methods have been applied to the Maremma (I speak now of the portion between Campiglia Marittima and Orbetello); admirable work is being carried on, fine drainage canals cross it, and the destruction of the mosquito renders the country comparatively safe for dwellers and for visitors. Much of the land is owned by wealthy proprietors or large syndicates, and is cultivated with the aid of the latest agricultural machinery. And so it curiously happens that progress has taken possession of this remote corner, and works its wonders there while some better known regions of Italy still keep the plough of Virgil.

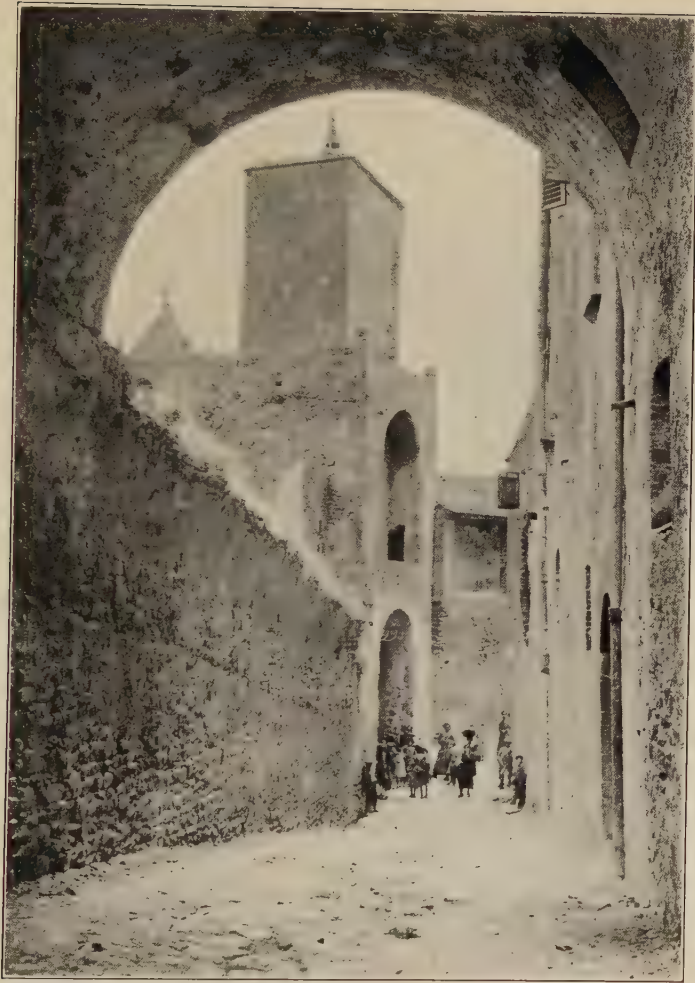
A few miles to the northwest of Grosseto there lies over against the shore an elevated bit of country like a little hilly island rising from the plain. On the west it is washed by the sea, Castiglione della Pescaja is upon its southern boundary, and Scarlino on the north, while Vetulonia lies on the eastern slope. In Vetulonia there is little to attract one, but the drive thither from Grosseto is a reward in itself, a long winding climb among the hills, through groups of trees and grassy meadows where the hedges are full of dogroses and the wild fig clings to steep

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

banks above the road, each turn of which shows the widening prospect from a new angle. At the top stands the harsh little town. As for its title, the learned agree that wherever the famous Etruscan Vetulonia once stood it was not upon the spot occupied by the Vetulonia of to-day, but be this as it may, the town resolutely claims the name.

In the Middle Ages it was known as Castiglion-Bernardi, later it was called Colonna, but a tablet set in a wall now records that in 1887 King Umberto came and restored to the place its ancient appellation. As it now appears it has a lean look of poverty, there are but two houses that have an air of comfort. The small parish church with a tawdry interior and a front that resembles a warehouse rather than a sanctuary, shows a big, disproportionate campanile rising behind it. The few inhabitants look decent but too unoccupied; their digging for Etruscan remains has been denied them, and they miss the gains from the sale of their small discoveries. Rules are stringent. "We must have leave now before we plant a tree," they say despondently, but they make no appeal for charity.

From Vetulonia there is no cross-road to Castiglione della Pescaja, so there is the pleasant winding way to be taken again, leading down to the plain and then skirting the hills, sometimes beside the River Bruna, now grown broader than when we met it near Castello di Pietra, sometimes leaving it to pass through a grove of cork oaks and touch the border of a canal patterned over with water-lilies. Where the Bruna empties into the sea Castiglione lies on a declivity above it, guarding the little harbor with its mild commerce in charcoal. It was well fortified as all such places once had need to be; its walls are almost perfect still and a stout castle crowns the summit. Once there were battlements, but they have been filled in, and a too complacent hand has emphasized restorations with unusually wide joints of white cement. Where there is brick-



Castiglione della Pescaja.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

work to renew, fancy has been allowed to run riot and the fresh mortar becomes a conspicuous pattern to which the bricks are quite subordinate. The people take much pride in the improvements that are in progress.

At the east portal the great timbered gates strengthened with iron still hang upon their hinges, and between them you enter the Street of Love, a narrow thoroughfare passing between the high wall of the city on one side and tall buildings on the other, and under many broad arches heavily braced. Part way up this street stands the most important house that Castiglione boasts, once the seat of the government of Leopoldo, whose grandiose *stemma*, surmounted by a crown, still keeps its place above the door. Its present occupant is the landed proprietor of greatest local importance. The house parallels the city wall for some distance, and being but about thirty feet in depth is composed of a long series of apartments without intervening passageways, a sort of extended suite, which at short intervals is connected at the level of its second story with the city wall by means of the broad arches before mentioned. The spaces over the arches balustraded and used as terraces are gay with potted plants, and as the line of wall has crumbled at its summit sufficiently to invite many wild blossoming plants and small shrubs to take root in it, the whole has the effect, at least in springtime, of a delightful hanging garden. The interior of the house, which was undergoing certain repairs, had space and light and contained some good mantels and door-frames of stone. It needed only the touch of taste in the furnishing to become an attractive dwelling.

The village itself has shrunk away from the castle, leaving a large area empty; perhaps fire swept it and the number of inhabitants did not require the rebuilding of it. There are the evidences of stone foundations here and there. The castle now stands quite alone, and many of the

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

houses crowded together below it are ruinous, but blue sky and blue sea, the rocky height, the river under it, and the busy life among the little craft in the harbor, all combine to give Castiglione a charm and interest of its own, besides which there is much quiet beauty in its surroundings. From the height of the castle looking south there is the perfect crescent of a little bay cutting into the flat shore, on the north lies a strip of white sandy beach with pine woods descending the slopes of low hills to meet it, and beyond this a long rocky point running out into the waves, upon which stands one of that succession of towers created in the past to give warning of the approach of pirates.

Late in the afternoon as I was reluctantly leaving Castiglione I came upon a little rosy-faced lad by the roadside. He was whistling, but in an unusual way; the low sounds he was producing were like rippling bird-notes and so sweet I could but linger and listen. Seeing this he grew a bit embarrassed, and the bird song died away. It was necessary to talk a little with him and put him at his ease before he would continue, and even then the compact was that we should turn away from each other so that there might be no disconcerting observation on my part. It is a peculiar use of the throat that makes possible this pretty warbling, so difficult to imitate. I was to hear it later more than once, as it is not so uncommon among the country people thereabout, but not again in such perfection. With this little fellow there came now and then what sounded like the simultaneous production of two separate but harmonious notes. As we continued our way back to Grosseto the softly trilling cadence lingered upon the air hauntingly, and seemed to be taken up by the homing birds, singing as they always do most meltingly when those last level rays of sunset light them to their nests.

To explore the shore south of Grosseto one travels upon the old Roman road, the Via Aurelia, which extends

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

across the plain for some ten miles before reaching the ferry on the River Ombrone, at this point a sunny willow-edged stream. It is a monotonous drive not enlivened by the occasional groups of eucalyptus one passes, relics of a former theory of reclamation partly carried out. They have the dejected air of pining exiles, their pendulous foliage is of a mouldy gray, the whole shrinking contorted tree bearing little resemblance to those stately and verdant examples that flourish in homes they love. On the south bank of the Ombrone the flat line of the coast is interrupted and a steep ridge of wooded hills, the Uccellina, rises, descending on the seaward side to break in cliffs washed by the waves and often inaccessible. This ridge persists as far as the mouth of the River Osa, where it suddenly comes to an end. At regular intervals along its summit continues that chain of slim towers, all musically named, which connect it on the north with Castiglione della Pescaja, a line of sentinels to give warning of the dreaded corsairs who in the past so terribly scourged that shore.





ORBETELLO. THE WALLS

CHAPTER III

THE LEGEND OF BELLA MARSILIA—TALAMONE—AL- BEGNA—ORBETELLO



LITTLE beyond the ferry of the Ombrone you enter the charming narrow valley of the Uccellina, lying between the hills of its name and another ridge on the inland side, of lower slopes, scrub and grass-covered, the Poggi di Montiano. It is a little oasis between the plains at either end, a flowery, woodsy place where it is very sweet to linger in springtime. The valley was part of the holdings of the Aldobrandeschi, from whom it passed in the fourteenth century to the Marsili of Siena. Collechio, midway of the valley, was the central point of this estate and is represented now by a group of substantial modern buildings. From this point come into view three

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

greater towers not belonging to the chain already mentioned, those of the Uccellina, San Robano, and Bella Marsilia. San Robano, fragment of a famous abbey of the Templars, ivy-curtained and beautifully picturesque, is difficult of access, but I fancy that if on some moonlight night you were to penetrate the enchanted woods that defend it from the outside world, you might descry certain tall, grave figures in long white cloaks signed with a scarlet cross, and as they passed you might hear the muffled clang of armor underneath those mantles that marked them as more warlike than priestly.

Bella Marsilia may be reached in less than an hour by a rough footpath which ascends one of the spurs of the ridge, all of which spurs are covered with dense green, the sunny highlights of the white oaks being brought into vividness by the rich bronze of the cork trees. This covert no longer ago than the last century sheltered many a roebuck and wild boar. One is welcomed on the way by whole slopes covered with rosemary and other fragrant shrubs till the last pitch below the castle walls is reached, and here begins an admirable defence. Never before did I encounter such compact rows of nettles reinforced by thistles.

The heavy square tower of the fortress still stands, but has probably lost much of its original height; a portion of the wall rises to some twenty feet near it, and for the rest one may trace the boundaries of the whole large enclosure, walking most of the way upon what remains of the foundations, or over mounds formed by its fallen stones. The Castle of Collechio it was called, while the Aldobrandeschi owned it, but some five hundred years ago it received another name by which it has been known ever since, the Bella Marsilia, and the tradition which renamed it is recorded by Centorio, an old chronicler. That La Rossa, the heroine of the story, is without doubt identical

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



TORRE DELLA BELLA MARSILIA

with the famous and infamous Roxelana, Sultana of Suleiman I, the most illustrious of all Turkish sultans with the exception of Mohammed the Conqueror, he affirms to be indisputable, but adds deprecatingly that he would not wish to have it thought he takes pride in this assertion, for it should add to no one's patriotic vanity to claim a historic personage, however renowned, who consents to live outside the mother country and the Catholic faith. He, however, consents to give the facts simply as true history, that he may not stand in the light of those who desire ardently to have knowledge of them.

The story taken principally from this source is as follows. When Nanni Marsili of a noble house of Siena possessed this great Maremman estate, he was in the habit of going for part of the year to the Castle of Collechio, together with his family. In the year 1543 Turkish corsairs landed upon the coast and attacked the fortress. Though bravely defended it was taken, sacked, and burned.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and those within slaughtered with the exception of one person. This was the young daughter of Marsili, a child striking in form and face and possessed of a glorious mass of copper-colored hair lighted to pure gold when the sun touched it. The pirates took note of her promise and decided to carry her alive to Constantinople and present her to their Sultan. This they accordingly did, and Suleiman was as much impressed with her rare qualities as were his discriminating pirates. He caused her to be placed in his harem and carefully educated, and as in time she developed extraordinary beauty and intelligence, he fell ardently in love with her; and the devotion that grew up between the two and increased rather than lessened with years has become one of the famous romances of history.

La Rossa, as we shall continue to call her, obtained a control over Suleiman so complete that as time went on and her unscrupulous ambition grew, she was able to carry out her schemes in a way nothing short of amazing. By Suleiman she had four sons, Mohammed, Bajazet, Selim, and Zeangiro (who was a hunchback), and one daughter. As these children were born to her she dreamed day and night of seeing one of her sons succeed to the throne of his father, yet while her influence with Suleiman was supreme she knew that custom had placed an obstacle in her way almost impossible to overcome. Suleiman had an older son, Mustafa, child of a Circassian slave, and according to precedent this son would be his heir. All the more was this to be expected that Mustafa, now grown to young manhood, was endowed with great ability and courage, besides physical beauty and strength. Everywhere admired, he was exceedingly popular in the army, and in particular the idol of the janizaries. His father had made him governor of Amasia. La Rossa considering long how Mustafa could be excluded from the succession in favor of her sons, laid her plans with careful deliberation.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

To Mulplet, the priest, highest authority in the Mohammedan religion, she declared that she had made a vow to build a mosque to the honor of God and the Prophet, but that she was troubled in mind lest this should not prove acceptable. To this he replied that it would certainly be acceptable but that it would profit nothing to her soul, she being a slave, all the glory thereof accruing to Suleiman with whose gold it would be built. This blow prostrated La Rossa, who now fell into a melancholy so profound that she neither ate nor drank. Seeing her state Suleiman was thrown into the greatest distress, but for a while La Rossa refused to disclose the cause of her grief. At last, yielding to his anxiety, she divulged the reason, and added that as a slave she was convinced that eternal damnation would be her portion. Suleiman at once publicly declared her free and called upon all to respect her accordingly. La Rossa now revived, and Suleiman having given this proof of his affection, expected to continue the same relations with her as had existed before; but this she with sorrow refused, saying that according to Turkish law a slave might be thus treated, but not a free woman, such as she had now become through his magnanimity. If Suleiman hesitated before all that a marriage with La Rossa would involve it was not for long; he made her his wife and settled upon her an independent income.

So far La Rossa's success was complete, yet she was still uneasy; her children, it is true, were raised above all others in rank, yet she felt she could never be quite secure of the throne for her son while Mustafa with all his charm and popularity remained alive. He must in some way be removed. She pondered long and realized that she needed a confederate. The vizier, Rustem Pacha, owed to her his elevation to that important position; she could therefore count upon his assistance. With him she began to plot against the life of Mustafa, and after much discussion it

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

was agreed that poison should be secretly administered, but by this time Mustafa had been warned of the intrigues against him and the attempt failed. This was a disappointment, as the lady had hoped to accomplish her aim with speed and finality, but though somewhat chagrined she was not discouraged, and she now decided to apply herself to a slower but surer method. She began to plant in the mind of Suleiman suspicion and fear of his oldest son. Appearing to suffer deeply between love for her husband and reluctance to believe ill of Mustafa, she imparted her conviction that Mustafa's ambition had grown to such a point that he was not willing to wait till the natural time for his inheritance, but was absolutely now plotting the death of his father; and that the reason for his having so ingratiated himself with the janizaries was thus made plain; also that he was now trying to strengthen himself further through proposing an alliance by marriage with the King of Persia. Suleiman, fond and proud of his splendid son, declared himself unable to believe in such treachery, but La Rossa ceased not to fan the flame she had lighted, and she next forged letters purporting to have been received by her from the Pacha of Amasia, containing confirmation of all she had suggested. The Pacha stated that Mustafa was seeking to ally himself with Persia for the purpose of dethroning his father.

In the end La Rossa succeeded and Suleiman, excited to the last degree by rage and terror, appointed Rustem Pacha commander of an expedition to Amasia purporting to be organized for the purpose of invading Persia, but in reality undertaken to make Mustafa a prisoner. Suleiman himself accompanied the army and when they neared Amasia, that picturesque pyramid of rock above the River Iris, he halted and sent a summons to his son to appear before him. The friends of Mustafa begged him not to obey this command, and tried to convince him that a trap was

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

laid for him, but Mustafa, conscious of his own innocence and refusing to distrust his father, advanced at once with his own soldiers to the spot where Suleiman was encamped. Careful to be advised of the approach of Mustafa the traitor Rustem detached a company of janizaries from the army of Suleiman and sent it forward, ostensibly to meet the prince and do him the honor of escorting him to his father. The janizaries, overjoyed to see again the leader they adored, greeted him with demonstrations of delight, and this Rustem hastened to impart to the Sultan with sinister exaggerations, complaining that he had not been able to hold the janizaries in check, for, as soon as they found themselves near Mustafa they had broken away from all authority and gone to join him.

Meanwhile Mustafa had had a dream which when he told it to his courtiers greatly disturbed them. He had been with a certain prophet in Paradise. From where they stood together he beheld upon one hand that glorious place where virtuous Mohammedans are rewarded, on the other he could see that two rivers flowed; they were black as pitch and boiled continually. In these dreadful waters struggled the heretics in perpetual torment. No one could interpret this vision, but all agreed that it was in the nature of a warning, and they renewed their urging that he would not put himself into his father's hands. This Mustafa steadily refused, saying that obedience to parents was a sacred duty, and reminding them that whatever might occur an honorable death was the gate to eternal bliss. Therefore with unshaken courage yet hardly without misgivings he prepared to appear before his father. Dressed superbly in a white costume which he intended to be symbolic, he proceeded to the pavilion of Suleiman, where with great ceremony he was introduced to the interior. On the instant he realized his fate. His father was not there, but in his place stood seven swarthy mutes, one

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

of them holding the fatal bow-string. Mustafa was powerful beyond most men, and a dreadful struggle took place; in the few moments that unequal struggle lasted he heard his father's voice from behind a curtain urging the assassins to kill quickly the traitor who had made his nights sleepless.

So died the gallant Mustafa, and as he lay there the heavy curtain was drawn aside and his father entered and looked upon the body. When he had regarded it for a moment he sent for Zeangiro, the deformed child of himself and La Rossa, whom he had brought with him on this journey. This boy was passionately attached to the magnificent half-brother, so much his senior, whom he had made his ideal in all things. He now entered, all unconscious of what had taken place. Suleiman with a wave of his hand bade him salute his brother. For a moment he stood frozen with horror, then forgetting everything but his grief and the awful spectacle before him, he turned upon his father, shaken with sobs, and pouring forth curses and reproaches, he presently drew a dagger and drove it into his own heart.

Suleiman sent deputies to take possession of the rich effects of his son, but the janizaries, unconscious of the reason for their leader's continued absence and indignant at this attempt meanly to rob him, refused to give them up, and there came near being a bloody uprising. But the knowledge of Mustafa's death could not long be concealed from them, and utterly bewildered and blind with rage, they surged in a mass to the tent of the Sultan, furiously demanding the reason for the murder, and instant revenge. In this peril Suleiman seems to have taken refuge in sacrificing Rustem Pacha, whom he degraded from his rank, and the vizier barely escaped from the camp with his life, while Suleiman attempted to appease the janizaries with rich gifts and promises that if they would be patient

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and accompany him to Aleppo, the case of Mustafa's treacherous intentions should be thoroughly sifted and justice done. Some light upon the deceit practised upon him seems now to have entered the mind of Suleiman, for we are told he deliberated upon the punishment due to La Rossa, and that he began publicly to caress the child Mohammed, son of the murdered Mustafa, bestowing upon him rank and honors.

At this point the manuscript of Centorio drops the tragic story, leaving the enlightenment of the Sultan, if it took place, untold, as well as his subsequent meeting with his guilty wife. History tells us that not long after the date of Mustafa's death, the Sultana died, and that Suleiman caused her body to be placed in the most beautiful tomb that could be provided by Moslem art. There is, however, a romantic addition to the narrative by a later writer. This relates that on the very day La Rossa gave birth to her first son there died the newborn infant of the Circassian, her rival, whence the latter, fearful of losing the favor of Suleiman if she had no son to present to him, concealed the death of her child and had diligent search made for another which she might put in its place. Destiny willed that she was given the child of La Rossa, for which her own dead infant was substituted. Thus she gained favor while her rival was supposed to be so unfortunate as to have given birth to a still-born son. The boy was given the name of Mustafa and grew up believed by all to be the offspring of the Circassian.

Soon after the departure of Suleiman for Amasia, La Rossa was told of the substitution and given proof that Mustafa was her own son. Nearly crazed she set out and traveled with all the speed possible to overtake her husband and prevent the assassination she had herself planned. It was in vain; before she could reach him news was brought her that the purpose she had so schemed to carry

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

out was accomplished, Mustafa was dead. Desperation took possession of her, and going no further she took poison and died.

A shocking story this, full of dreadful passions and dreadful crimes, yet the authentic history of Constantinople in those centuries records many as terrible, and if, putting faith in the genealogical tree of the Marsili family, we accept the tradition that La Rossa and Roxelana are identical, the imagination begins to deal with the girlhood of this Tuscan child carried away to those alien surroundings; whether she sickened for her soft Italian home, whether she grieved for her murdered kindred, of all this there is no record, but we are told that when she came into power she sent messages to those of her family left in Siena, pressing them to come to her and offering them wealth and position. It is not added that any of them took advantage of these invitations, and daring would have been he who ventured to do so. Out of her merciless schemes came nothing that she might have taken pride in. The succession was secured to her sons, but they were unworthy of it; they fought among themselves and murder after murder resulted. Selim finally came to the throne and proved one of the worst of his line; base, grossly sensual and cowardly, he was held in contempt by his people and through the excesses which caused his death after a short reign, gained the title of The Sot.

Emerging from the shelter of the Uccellina, where the ridge drops suddenly to the level of the shore, Talamone appears upon its low barren headland. If we choose to go back to thirteen centuries before Christ we may fancy Telamon the Argonaut landing in its little harbor; or some centuries later we may see the shores dotted with Roman villas that gleamed through enchanting gardens. Now it is a bleak, rocky waste; a castle harshly rebuilt and standing alone, a handful of poor houses near by, and a few

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

fishing boats at the shore are all that is left to-day. In the Middle Ages it passed from hand to hand and for a short time under Siena revived to some degree of prosperity, but good fortune never stayed long with it. Piccinino took it, the terrible pirate Areodeno of the Red Beard ravaged it, and it finally went to ruin altogether, seaweed encumbered its port, the winds heaped walls of sand about it, and stagnant pools bred fever, malaria ravaged it, and Repetti tells us it was a source of danger for miles inland. Corsairs, who according to tradition appeared immune to all such peril, nested there and defied capture, and it is only now beginning to be habitable.



TALAMONE

"Guardala e passa!" is a better motto for Talamone than for Massa; still from it the view of the indented shore is charming and across the gulf of its name rise the twin peaks of Monte Argentario at whose foot low-lying Orbetello seems to float like the island of Æolus, upon the surface of its lagoon. Toward it we take our way, for Talamone does not detain us long; but there is still a river to cross, the Albegna, and even as late as the last century

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

we might have approached it through the pine woods that Dennis describes. To-day not a tree remains. The Albegna is a stream with the most tranquil air imaginable, the margin plumed and tufted with greenery that dips softly to its slow current. Nothing could look more sweet-tempered and harmless, yet its reputation is of the worst; it is given to inundating grain and drowning sheep. The ferry is so near its mouth that you see the river join the sea a stone's throw away, but so quietly that hardly a wavelet strives against the delivered water. Upon the opposite bank stands a miniature fort. Small as it is it bears itself with an air of impregnability and jealously exacts respect, and no wonder, for here was the Tuscan boundary until 1814 when the last Spanish *presidio* was absorbed by the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

It was upon a sombre evening that I last saw the place, the sky was faintly gray, there was something mournful in the wide, vague landscape, something plaintive about the wistful, patient faces of the sheep that encumbered the space about the ferry. We waited beside the road for a while and talked with the shepherds. They were paying for the crossing in weight of fresh *pecorino*, an excellent sheep's-milk cheese. My sympathies being with them rather than with stern municipal officials, the price seemed high; they thought so, too.

"It is a horror!" they declared dejectedly. "Three cents for every sheep no matter how large the flock."

"But this is such a narrow stream, why can you not let them swim across?"

"We have tried it but we lose too many; some are tired with the long road, some are old. They get drowned and they are stolen, and then there are the lambs. No, we cannot risk it."

The yearly migration from the plain to the mountains was beginning. The Maremman shepherds are a genuine

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

nomadic race, though their numbers are yearly lessening for the reason that the area open to them for pasturage is more and more restricted through the encroachments of agriculture. The open grazing ground now begins near the Albegna River and from there extends south toward Rome. The shepherds divide the year between this region and the mountains as far north as the Pistoiese, eight months in the former and four in the latter, renting pasturage in both places. Their reason for traveling such long distances is that the forage dries early in the Maremma, upon the hills as well as in the valleys, while it matures later in the north and lasts longer. The tall conical straw huts in which they live while in the south singularly resemble the dwellings of some of the aborigines of South Africa and are quite as primitive. Each stands alone, resembling a magnified beehive and with quite as detachable a look. Nothing around it indicates any length of occupancy, there is not a trace of cultivation or an outbuilding near, and the sheep of the owner are enclosed at night with precisely such means as one may see in the background of sixteenth-century pictures by Andrea di Niccolo or Pietro di Domenico in the gallery of Siena, a circle of rods thrust into the ground and connected with a cord. With this movable sheepfold the shepherd can enclose his flock at home or at any point on his recurrent travels.

One of these stood near our road, and the owner, a ruddy, contented looking fellow, lounged by it and had nothing more pressing to do than to have a word with idle passersby like ourselves. He had spent twelve winters in this abode, he said. He was of course called Neri, shortened from Ranieri, which name seems to be given to most boys in the Maremma. Can it have come down as a heritage from that ancient ancestor of so long ago, Ranieri who in the eleventh century was the first Marquis of Tuscany? Neri was about to start for the north. He

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

offered us water, his impulse of hospitality had no means of reaching further, and we parted with good wishes on both sides.

When the time for the migration of this population comes, the women and children of the family in a cart with their few belongings either follow or precede the shepherd with his flock. At night they camp and tend the ailing sheep and the newly born lambs, and thus they travel day after day till the mountains are reached. Meantime the sheep lawfully or lawlessly obtain their food by the wayside. They are driven slowly and eat incessantly as they pass along, while the grass by the roadside and every green shoot in the hedges suffer. The farmers behind those hedges are on the alert at this season, for if there is a break in one, the shepherd, if he has a conscience, loiters and looks the other way, or, if he has not, boldly encourages the sheep to press through and snatch all the forage possible before the owner discovers the incursion. When this moment arrives, imprecations and bellowings of rage rend the air, the sheep helplessly tumble over one another as they are driven back through the opening, the shepherd, confronted with his trespass, acts surprise or effrontery as the case may be and with accusations and recriminations the uproar on both sides trails away into the distance. We had not long left our shepherd acquaintance when we found upon the road an emblem of his calling and that of all his tribe, one of the little sheep-bells in use hereabout, so sweetly ineffectual as to sound, but so pretty, so like ancient bronze in form and surface. We accepted it with all it implied as a fitting memorial of the country.

There is not another place so curiously situated as Orbetello, or so difficult to picture to one who has not seen it. One must have recourse to the imagination seconded by a map. The happiest phrase I have heard applied to its relation to its opposite island is, "Monte Argentario lies

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

beside it like a great ship moored by its three ropes of sand." The mountainous island rises steeply from the sea, two narrow strips of sand, about eight miles apart at the shore and converging to three at Argentario, connect it with the mainland from which, about midway between the two, stretches the narrow tongue of sand upon which Orbetello was built. This is now extended by a dike that continues to the opposite shore and bears the road. Thus two lagoons are formed, in all ten square miles in extent. They are so shallow that they have nowhere a greater depth than five feet, but they swarm with fish which enter by a small canal in the northern *tombola*. One of these lagoons is free to the inhabitants, the other is reserved for the municipality, and as the causeway which supports the road is pierced at intervals the fish have the choice of favoring either party. They are said not to be of the best quality but I did not taste them while there.

After crossing the Albegna the road follows the shore for a short distance, till, wheeling to the west, it runs out upon the isthmus which we follow for two miles to reach Orbetello. There we are confronted by a stout line of fortifications, stretching from bank to bank, and pass through a pompous gateway, Spanish in character and embellished with coats of arms. That of Orbetello itself, by the way, is amusing, a subdued dolphin is trampled upon by a rampant lion, who claws a trident but at the same time looks over his shoulder with the most intimate of winks at the beholder. Orbetello is surrounded by a heavy sea-wall of great antiquity and it is worth while to take a boat and follow the line of it. It is formed of enormous polygonal blocks of stone excepting near the top where courses of inferior construction, added much later, finish it.

It must have been a place of great strength when it was the capital of the Spanish *presidio*, last garrison of the empire upon Italian soil. The Spanish occupied it after

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

being driven from Siena in 1554, and Spain, and afterward Naples, held the strip of land between the Albegna River and the Fiora till Napoleon came a hundred and fifty years later. Their occupation has left its stamp upon the architecture and there are Spanish epitaphs in the church and Spanish archives in the Municipal Palace, but upon the people hardly a mark is left. They speak an uncorrupted Tuscan though a few of them bear names that have persisted from that foreign time. It is a favorite resort in summer when Grosseto and other places near it become torrid, and it has been singularly free from malaria, but how visitors in any number are accommodated I could not discover. The principal inn is small and far from luxurious; as for attractions, they are few in comparison with those of other places. Monte Argentario I did not visit; it has rich mines; and Port Ercole upon the southern shore of it is a picturesque village.

A few miles south of Orbetello one comes to the wooded hill where ancient Ansedonia lay. Had I been an impassioned Etruscan instead of but a lukewarm one I should have made the long, steep ascent and looked at the remains of its walls and the view which is so highly commended. The afternoon was beautiful, I was not hurried, yet I was satisfied with gazing at it from a distance, a recollection which now brings a mild regret. If time allows one may follow the main road a little farther and, passing the lagoon of Burana with its curious squat tower, climb the Hills of the Wind to see the village of Capalbio with its fine, defiant gateway set in crumbling walls of defence and its recent memorial, the grave where lies one of the most famous bandits of modern times, Tiburzi, King of the Macchia.



VILLA CORSINI

CHAPTER IV

TIBURZI THE BRIGAND



DRIVING inland from Orbetello, there is a long level stretch to pass before one reaches the first undulations of the Maremman mountains. Where they begin, a building looking half villa half fortress stands upon an elevation above the road.

"It was villas such as this of Prince Corsini's, that paid tribute to the brigand Tiburzi," remarked my friend the Sieneese, "and this was the field of his exploits."

It is hard to realize that it is but a few years since the close of a career like Tiburzi's, rendered possible by conditions that have so completely changed. "The land of the wild boar and of Tiburzi" the region was called; and from these hills absentee landlords contented themselves

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

with what income they could wring from estates managed in spite of malaria and highway robbery. Two courses were open to the owners of these lands: to live in a constant state of defensive warfare, subject to loss of cattle and other depredations on the one hand; or, on the other, to pay tribute to a robber captain. Many submitted to the latter condition, humiliating though it might be, and thereby enjoyed a measure of security. A yearly sum paid to a powerful brigand secured them immunity from being plundered by lesser highwaymen, for a landlord known to be under the protection of such a captain was not molested by others. Satirical as it may sound, under this arrangement crime notably diminished; for the brigand was in reality more powerful than his country's government, and controlled the zone in which he operated with an authority far more complete.

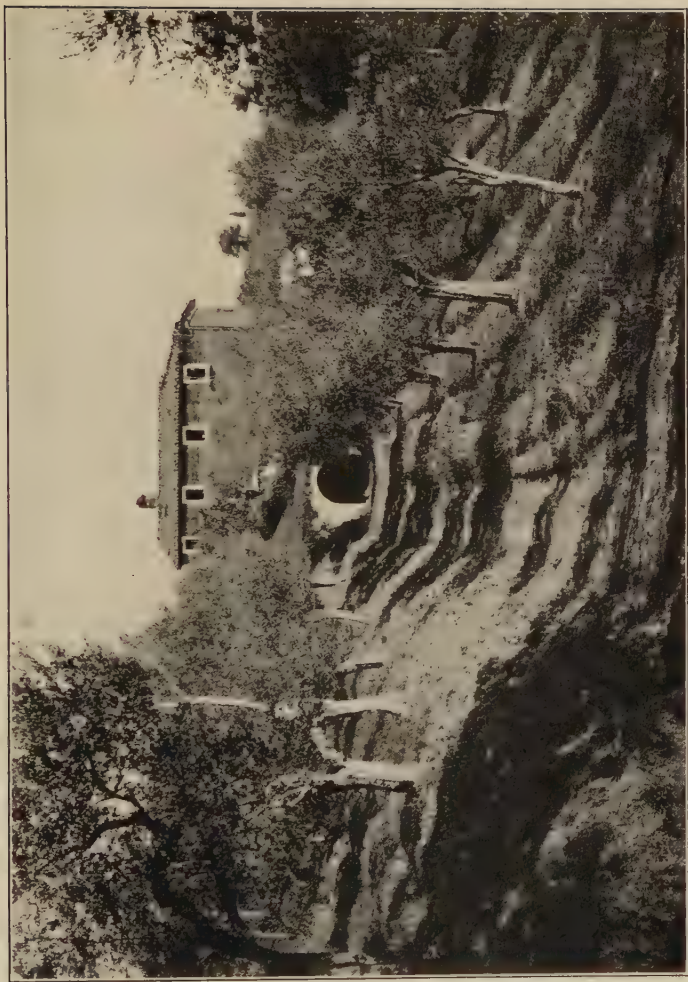
The existence of such outlaws was for years only spasmodically interfered with. After some flagrant outrage, a band of *carabinieri* would be sent to ferret out the ring-leaders, or a reward would be offered for their apprehension. A fruitless search followed, in which the brigand escaped, while the poor *contadini*, suspected of favoring him, were arrested.

The reason for such a condition is explained in substance as follows, by Professor Sighele. Writing in 1890 he says: "To overcome an able brigand there should exist less fear among the people and less weakness in their rulers. The relation of the peasantry to the bandit is such that not only is he assisted, but protected, fed, and furnished with arms and with information of the movements of the *carabinieri*. Besides this, there is the favoring character of the country, the famous *macchia* as it is called, composed of square leagues of hill and ravine densely covered with a dwarf forest tangled, thorny, full of pits and precipices, virtually inaccessible, impossible to

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

surround, and useless to explore. Malaria reigns there as the poor *carabiniere* well knows, and the dread disease numbers many more victims than does the lead of the assassin."

Domenico Tiburzi is perhaps the most famous example of the closing phase of powerful brigandage in Italy. The beginning of such a career as his was apt to be the commission of a crime, the culprit fled from justice, and living for a time in hiding, fell easily into the life of the highwayman. The turning point with Tiburzi is said to have been a love affair and a murder. He was born at Cellere, a little village a few miles from Viterbo, in 1826, and according to the papal records, was over thirty years old before the first murder committed by him. For this he was at once arrested, and a curious story is told in this connection. Instead of the customary speedy trial and condemnation, he was shortly released, or else allowed to escape, because it was whispered a noble family had need of him for a time to carry out a private vendetta. However this may be, within two years he was again in prison, and at the close of his trial was condemned to the galleys for eighteen years. From this imprisonment he contrived to escape a little later, and then began that extraordinary career in which, with bravery, audacity, and a character of unusual force, he rose to the virtual control of a large extent of country in the southern portion of Tuscany. He was tall and handsome, with brilliant blue eyes, and though delicately built, of a prodigious physical strength. He became known as the King of the Macchia. He gathered about him a band of followers and with these under his orders, established a system of hiding places, and of cached arms and provisions, which, together with a knowledge of the woods so exact and complete that he was easily able to evade capture, equipped him for operating with a success that for years never failed him.



A Farm House.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Among those who joined Tiburzi and agreed to his unquestioned leadership was Biagini, an expert shot and an accomplished bandit of the older generation. This man, together with Fioravanti, Tiburzi's son-in-law, who left the mild occupation of cook in a training school for priests, for the more exciting life of the highway, were his trusted lieutenants. The size of his band, originally considerable, was gradually reduced through the slaying or capture of its members; but with the course of years, Tiburzi brought his territory under a system that had less need of numbers. Menichetti and Ansuini, a pair belonging to the younger generation, were also ambitious to join his group, but he refused to enroll them, at the same time giving them clearly to understand that he considered their methods lacked refinement; the fact being that Menichetti and his friend Ansuini carried on their profession in the primitive manner by the direct employment of assassination and robbery. Tiburzi added the warning that he allowed no infringement of his region of operations, and Menichetti and his friend submitted sadly and confined themselves to a position farther south.

In the loneliness of the Maremman mountains there was no lack of secure refuge for men like these. There were grottoes, curtained with tangled vines, whence, perhaps, the wild boar must first be dislodged; there were slit walls of rock readily fashioned into intricate passages; there were caves concealed by nature and easy to fortify. The way to them led over rugged heights, through deep ravines, beside foaming torrents, but there were also the crumbling remains of many a forgotten castle buried deep in the woods, such as the Roccaccia, that majestic fragment of a Sienese fortress a few miles south of Manciano; but most secret of all, and nearly inaccessible, lay the heaped ruins of Castro, that hapless stronghold destroyed by Pope Innocent X in the days when popes were powerful enough

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

to decree the overthrow of a city for a crime against the Church. A little war had raged round Castro, one of the famous house of Farnese had there murdered a bishop.

This spot, one among many, was a favorite covert of Tiburzi and his friends. That scarce a demolished wall reared itself above the earth made it none the worse for their purpose; deep below the mounded masses of stone lay many a vaulted chamber, many a secret gallery. More than one well-disguised opening could be made to this underground domain. Something like a permanent home was established here, to which in time a certain rough luxury was added. Under exploration those torch-lighted depths must have made strange disclosures. Two hundred years had passed over them since the sudden ruin that befell the town. Who can guess what secret deposits were there unearthed of objects left behind in that day of terror and distress? Story tells us that at least one comforting discovery was made, a great store of wines had lain there undisturbed till upturned by Tiburzi! In this place existed as much security as a brigand could hope for, but, after all, what constituted the existence of such a man? Year after year of untiring activity, of sleep with firearms beside him, of an ear trained to the breaking of a twig, of perpetual vigilance against perpetual pursuit. He must be hardened to extreme heat and deadly cold, and immune to exposure and exhaustion, and most of all to the dreaded malaria.

It will be seen that success in such a career implied many qualities, both mental and physical, and much might be written of the characteristics of the men we are dealing with, but, putting aside those which come easily to mind as advantageous, there was one, as a matter of fact, almost universal, religious superstition.

As Tiburzi was both intelligent and cynical we have less record of his sharing in those beliefs, but they existed among his followers who were exceedingly devout. They

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

wore amulets, prayed fervently, and relied upon help from the Virgin and kindly disposed saints in their undertakings. Upon the body of Biagini, who was killed in an encounter with the *carabinieri*, a printed prayer was found, which he was known to recite every evening. It promised him protection against disloyalty at home, and all enemies and false testimony abroad, and especially secured him against sudden death. Of their view of life and conduct a letter from prison by Menichetti to his mother, while awaiting his trial, offers an interesting example. Considerably abridged, it reads as follows:

MY BELOVED MOTHER:

I write in answer to your affectionate letter and I am grieved to hear of your poor health which I fear is due to distress over my present plight. Try not to write quite so seriously, that is, do not dwell upon sickness and the like, you know how sensitive I am. It is better not to discuss unhappy things, nor to reproach me for my misfortunes. Let us pluck up courage and carry on bravely the remainder of life.

God has pardoned me while at the same time mildly chiding me for my foolishness in not having better concealed and protected myself. My ill doings have been much exaggerated and my judges might at least have spared my parents their present mortification. Destiny orders the lives of men. I do not say that mine is of the worst, because among many mishaps I have also had great good luck, but I have not contrived to balance them.

For this reason God is correcting me for the careless fool I have been. Beg Him, my dear Mother, to cease reproving me.

Your affectionate son,

DOMENICO MENICHETTI.

The special resource of the bandit of those times was, of course, the plunder of wealthy travelers. Tiburzi's directions were that there should be no wanton taking of life; and, in spite of the fact that assassination was resorted to when considered necessary, he looked upon himself as not only justifiable but moderate, and frequently boasted of his freedom from cruelty.

With him there was but one unpardonable crime, that of the informer, and for this, punishments were inflicted be-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

yond measure terrible. A person merely suspected was often beaten to the point of being disabled for weeks; but a proved spy was killed and sometimes with torture. Often not only death but extermination was the penalty, a whole family being wiped out for the offence of a single member.

On one occasion Tiburzi, with two or three followers, appeared suddenly upon the threshing-floor of such an informer, a *contadino* in good circumstances. Some twenty neighbors were there assembled at the time. Singling out the householder and his son, Tiburzi said: "You have exactly ten minutes to live. I give you these to enable you to make a will if you have not already done so. Dispose of your property and repeat a prayer if you choose."

No word of remonstrance or denial was listened to. Indeed it was hardly attempted after the first instant of agonized amazement. Those present, far from any effort at protecting their companions or resisting the sentence pronounced upon them, stood as if turned to stone. At the end of the ten minutes the two men were ordered to place themselves against a wall, the bandits shot them and walked away.

The reverse side of such horrors as these is the protection often afforded the unoffending peasantry. One day a debtor came to Tiburzi in distress; he was owing three hundred lire to his landlord, a hard man who would not listen to the excuse that his *contadino* had been unfortunate. The money was due in a week and not a lire was ready to satisfy the debt. "Come to me in five days," said Tiburzi, "and you shall have the money." Tiburzi then easily ascertained the first opportunity of a favorable encounter with the landlord, and meeting him not far from his own door, challenged him, but allowed him to ransom his life for three hundred lire, to which he eagerly agreed, and Tiburzi pocketing the amount needed to satisfy the



Magliano. Piazza San Martino.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

debt of the *contadino*, parted from the trembling landlord with a polite bow.

In the latter part of Tiburzi's life the violence of his earlier years was laid aside. Severe discipline had shown the wisdom of capitulating with him, and the assassination of a few of those who resisted contributing their share to his income had aided in bringing about a clear and general understanding. Murder and robbery were therefore no longer resorted to excepting, always, in case of betrayal and occasionally as a punishment for disobedience on such an occasion as the following.

Some of Tiburzi's younger followers setting out one day to range the countryside for prey, captured a young artist and brought him triumphantly before their leader. Tiburzi glanced from the terrified youth to his captors with a satirical expression. "So you went after a deer and have brought me a rabbit," he remarked dryly. Turning to the boy he said, "I have seen you going more than once to the castle of the Baroness M. You are probably a relative of hers." "No, Signor, I go to that castle only to paint frescoes, though once in a while I get an order for a small portrait. Out of it all I contrive to earn enough to eat, though little more." "Yours is a useless trade," rejoined Tiburzi, "but you do not seem to be overpaid." A few words from Biagini convinced him that the lad had spoken the truth, and turning to him again, he took from his pocket some coins and said, "You may go. Here are two scudi. See that you speak to no one of your visit here," and appointing Basil, one of his men, to show the boy his way to the highroad, he turned away from the young painter's expressions of gratitude. The guide led the artist for a mile or more through the woods, reflecting the while on the folly of bestowing such a sum of money upon a worthless painter. Presently they came out upon a jutting cliff which commanded a magnificent view. The

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

artist whose heart overflowed with joy at his release and the generosity of the brigand, stood still and exclaimed with delight at the wild and beautiful prospect spread out before him. At the same moment, Basil, who had slunk behind him, raised his gun and fired; the poor boy dropped to the ground without a cry. The aim of the assassin had been unerring. No compunction visited the robber, he possessed himself of the two scudi, flung the body into a ravine, and returned to the camp.

Biagini, who had already convicted Basil of what he looked upon as wanton cruelty and outrage, now kept an observant eye upon him and soon intimated to Tiburzi that he suspected the robbery and murder of the artist who had been given safe conduct. "Search Basil and you will find the two scudi as testimony," said Biagini. "Question him, he cannot meet your eye. I have told you before that it is injuring our reputation to keep him with us, a savage beast, shedding innocent blood and committing useless crimes." "If this is true, there shall be punishment," said Tiburzi. "Basil knows my rule, I never kill unless circumstances oblige me to, and especially am I against it where there is no advantage gained for us."

An investigation followed. Basil was forced to a confession and received short shrift. Once convinced, Tiburzi shot him with his own hand, the body was conveyed to the edge of the forest and left where the *carabinieri* discovered it two days later. Fastened upon the breast was a paper containing the words, "Because he was bloodthirsty."

Tiburzi was uniformly benevolent to the poor in his district, visiting their homes and distributing money freely when, in their need, they appealed to him. Indeed he was frequently called in to settle disputes, and as he showed both impartiality and good judgment, his verdict was accepted without discussion. As for the wealthy clients

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

from whom he exacted tribute, he was accustomed to meet them on the pleasantest terms.

"Who is that fine-looking hunter who has been dining with us?" said a guest to the agent of such a proprietor, as the individual referred to walked away.

"That," replied the agent, smiling, "is Tiburzi. You were probably unaware that you had the honor of meeting so celebrated a personage."

On another occasion a gentleman was paying a visit to a certain marquis, holding an important post under government. During a walk over the estate with his host they met a handsome, erect old man, with a gun slung across his shoulder. He stepped aside to make room for the marquis and his friend, at the same time lifting his hat with exceptional grace. As they passed on the visitor, who had taken him for an employee, remarked:

"There is a fine robust specimen, who will soon be reaching the age to demand a pension from you, marquis."

The marquis, with a quizzical glance, replied:

"I should never dream of presuming to pension royalty. That is 'Tiburzi, the King of the Macchia.'"

Toward such clients as the above Tiburzi scrupulously observed his part of the compact as the following incident will show. One morning the overseer of a large country property found himself confronted by a serious difficulty. A hundred or more harvesters assembled to gather in the crop suddenly declared a strike. Unable to come to terms with them, the distracted agent mounted his horse and set off for the nearest telegraph station, to communicate with his employer. This proprietor happened to be one of those under the so-called protection of Tiburzi. The agent had galloped but a short distance when he was stopped by two armed men.

"Who are you, and where are you going?" said the older of the two.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

"I am the agent of the Count —— and I beg you will not detain me," said the breathless *fattore*, and in a few words he explained the situation.

"Turn back," said the stranger curtly.

"For God's sake let me pass," cried the man, "or I am ruined!"

"Turn back I tell you," was the reply, and, forced to obey, the bewildered agent returned to the field, accompanied by the two men. Arrived at the boundary, they halted at some distance from the idle reapers.

"Men!" called Tiburzi in a thunderous voice, "you know who I am; get to work at once, or it will be the worse for you."

With instant obedience the harvesters seized their implements and set themselves to their task with an ardor that needed no further direction.

On a warm noonday one summer Tiburzi and Fioravanti arrived at the door of a remote cottage built upon the summit of a steep hill. They entered and requested the woman occupying it to cook a meal for them. While it was being prepared Tiburzi lounged and rested, but Fioravanti climbed to the roof and there seating himself, began to scan the surrounding country through a pair of field glasses. After a short time he descended, and remarked quietly to the *contadina*:

"You may hasten that meal a little. It happens that we must be leaving in three quarters of an hour."

The two friends then lent their assistance in the preparation of the food and soon had it smoking upon the table. Then sitting down with excellent appetites they consumed the meal slowly and with much enjoyment, after which they paid generously, saying, as they took their leave: "Give our regards to the gallant gentlemen who will visit you shortly."

Hardly ten minutes had passed before a pair of *cara-*

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

binieri, crimson and breathless, arrived at the cottage, and asked eagerly whether it was suspected that two notorious robbers were in that vicinity. The *contadina* could not forbear a smile as she pointed to the remains of the feast and mentioned the names of her guests whom she knew to be already beyond danger.

During the long career of Tiburzi he had by no means always lain concealed in the forest. From time to time he emerged and appeared in various places, jovial, richly dressed, spending money freely. Thus he returned openly to Cellere, his native town, to attend the wedding of a daughter. He visited Rimini upon the occasion of his son's entering the army, and he frequently went to Rome where he enjoyed the gayeties of many a crowded *festa*. But the consequences of such a career can never be restricted to a retribution visited upon the transgressor alone.

Many implicated willingly or unwillingly in his actions suffered—both those who were more or less guilty of complicity and those humble peasants who had been succored by him and who had shared their food with him. Three years before his death a series of memorable trials took place in Viterbo which resulted in the condemnation of nearly fifty persons accused of aiding him. Of his seven relatives living in the town of Cellere, all were condemned, justly or unjustly, to from three to seven years of imprisonment.

The security of a brigand did not increase with time. Almost without exception his end was a violent one, especially if he preferred battle to capture and prison. There were seventeen judgments against Tiburzi and although he may have smiled while they accumulated, as the years went on, more frequent and determined efforts were made to exterminate offenders of his type.

One evening in the autumn of 1896 Tiburzi and Fioravanti stopped at a cottage near Capalbio and asked

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

hospitality for the night. This was naturally granted, and after supper, as the two brigands sat with the family before the fire, Tiburzi related some of the many romantic adventures of his career. His hearers commented upon his hairbreadth escapes and the great strength with which he had effected them.

"Yes," he rejoined, "I am seventy, and I count upon another ten years. "Still," he added musingly, "I may not have more than an hour to live."

He was strangely right. A little later in the night the cottage was surrounded by *carabinieri*. The brigands seized their arms and rushed from the house. A desperate fight took place but they were overwhelmed by numbers and Tiburzi fell, fatally wounded. As the *carabinieri* bent over him, he murmured:

"Seek no further. I am Tiburzi, the King of the Macchia."





MAGLIANO. CHURCH OF THE ANNUNZIATA

CHAPTER V

MAGLIANO—PERETA—SCANSANO—ROCCALBEGNA ROC-
CHETTE DI FAZIO—COMPAGNATICO—PAGANICO



MAGLIANO is a little aristocrat among hill towns. As you approach it from the sea the circle of its mellow golden walls rests like a crown upon the eminence it covers. Green banks lie about it full of tangled vines and flowering bushes, and not far from the gate a twisted olive droops to shelter a little shrine. At certain points high up in the walls small, rectangular openings pierce the surface like windows peering from a cliff, but the banners that float from these casements are the product of humble laundry work. At the top no Guelf or Ghibelline battlements meet the eye, but instead a finish of *archetti* very graceful and decorative.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

The mediæval age had come to an end at the time these walls rose in the fifteenth century. Very massive are they and strengthened by many a ruined projecting tower, here and there hung with the green of vigorous ivy. But although in its present exterior Magliano is more youthful than many of its sister towns it owns an object precious to history, for in the flanking tower of its southern gateway, the Porta San Giovanni, which belongs to an earlier date, is embedded a shield bearing the coat of arms of the Aldobrandeschi, the red lion rampant and the imperial eagle. Small and insignificant it appears there; the careless eye would quite overlook it, yet it is the only heraldic memorial of the family left in its original position in all the broad Maremma where those famous and ferocious warriors held sway as far back as the eleventh century. The tower has crumbled till but two or three courses of stone remain above the little shield; may the people of Magliano have a care lest some day it should drop from its place and be lost forever. If we retreat still further into the past of Magliano, it has also its Etruscan memorials, indeed it has been warmly argued that the site of the lost city of Vetulonia should be looked for here, but be that as it may, its soil has the honor to have yielded a unique and mysterious Etruscan relic, the so-called *Piombo* of Magliano. This is a little leaden tablet, an irregular oval in shape, about five inches in length, covered with small engraved characters following the lines of a coiled serpent. Investigation has shown it to be a ritual, not yet deciphered, for votive offerings to certain Etruscan deities. The little object now lives in a special glass case in the Archæological Museum of Florence where it may be seen by the curious.

But all this time we are lingering at the gate of Magliano thinking upon her past and looking out the while upon the broad plain and the sparkling sea beyond, which form her



Magliano. The Town Wall.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

western prospect, standing as she does upon the first rampart of the hill country. Orbetello is in sight, a thin line of white against the blue mass of Monte Argentario, and nearer are wide level fields of cultivation and straightly traced canals covering the area where once lay the pestilent swamp of Talamone that in those days was broken only by thickets of stunted olive and gnarled, sickly apple trees tangled and weighted with ropes of grapevine, all lapsed to wildness. Passing through the gateway of Magliano its streets are seen to be unusually clean and open to the light. In the sunny little piazza of San Martino there is a quaint and pleasant friendliness. Little dwellings of gracious proportion are entered by outside staircases mounting to pilastered porticoes embellished with arches and lines of moulding, and carnations droop from their pots on the parapet. Wayward sloping roofs throw lovely complicated shadows, and the walls are of mingled brick and stone. Once they were covered with plaster, but much of it has fallen away, to their enhancement, for the varied colors of their present surface melt into a harmony of tone very agreeable to the eye. There is also the touch given by a fine well-head and an architectural chimney finished with tiny columns, while the severe little church of San Martino fills one side of the piazza relieved by its *campanile a vela*.

Upon the main street are more important structures, a Palazzo del Podestà two stories in height with a pleasant loggia, very solidly built and finely roofed, pillared, and adorned with many coats of arms. Then there is the palazzo of Checco Bello so-called, with its once beautiful façade. Its exquisite arched window frames with their slender columns are walled up, and small square holes have been irregularly cut through and glazed, for modern convenience, in a way to set one's teeth on edge; still the old openings have not been plastered over and the stone,

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

rich in color, with which they are filled, leaves the framing free. And who was the comely Checco for whom this charming *palazzino* in far-away Magliano was built? One fancies him brave and captivating, as well as handsome; making many friends welcome to his little palace full of hospitable gayety; and in sterner times one sees him gallantly fighting for his city and returning victorious through its gateway. But if we thus speculate we take an interest not shared by the present inhabitants. Questions concerning him elicit nothing more than a smile and a shrug, with the exclamation, "Who knows?"

A short distance outside the Porta San Giovanni lies the small church of the Annunziata, humble casket of a priceless treasure. Its exterior is of the plainest while the interior is as usual coarsely whitewashed, to the loss of the frescoes that once bloomed full of color upon its walls. A few of these frescoes have been brought to light again, among them that of a golden-haired boy saint with a lance resting against his shoulder while his blue eyes glance aside in a gentle reverie. But over the altar hangs a painting of the Madonna by that exquisite artist Neroccio di Landi. Bending a little, she is suckling the infant upon her knees, while her charming, serious face looks out of the canvas and meets the gaze of the beholder. With devotional vandalism, coarse gilt crowns have been nailed upon the heads of mother and child and strings of beads fastened about their throats, yet even this one can forget in the contemplation of their loveliness. To find in a sweet, remote place like this anything so beautiful, still resting undisturbed in its own tiny sanctuary, is the keenest of pleasures. One lingers and enjoys undisturbed, and if it be a soft spring afternoon as it was when I last saw it, even the beckoning of flower, leaf, and fragrance beyond the doorway cannot make it easy to leave it. But at last I did so and walked down the grassy alleys of an old

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



SAN BRUZIO

olive garden where slanting shafts of sunlight fell between the ancient trunks and here and there lighted tufts of wild flowers.

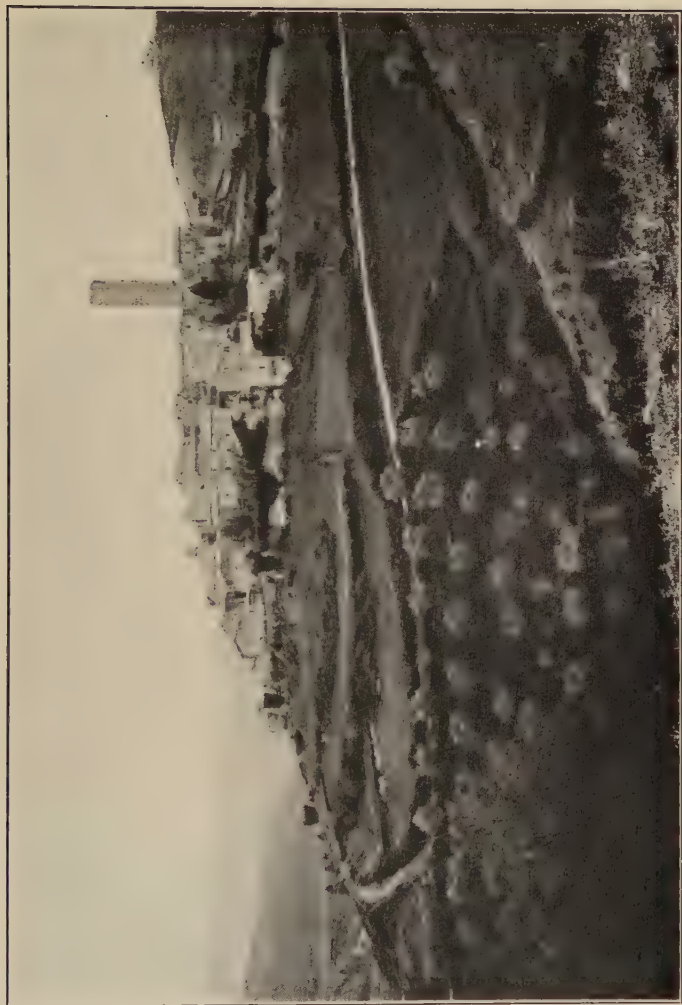
A short distance beyond it I came to the mound where rise the ruins of San Bruzio, that massive fragment of a vast church or abbey whose history is now lost. The centuries have passed it by but still it stands there in lonely grandeur with its fine proportions and reticent embellishment giving it dignity, while out of what is left of its great polygonal tower a little tree grows and spreads a scanty shade over one of its angles. Here, happy in a companionship such as fortunate chance encounters bring to one in Tuscany, I lingered through the last hour before departure and when it came to an end and good-byes had been said I carried away with me, to be added to the stored recollections of Magliano, the memory of an unexpected hospitality offered graciously and enjoyed keenly, the remembrance of a certain high, fair chamber full of quiet

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

comfort and the subdued color of old furnishings, books, and pictures, and of windows which looked forth from it above the wall of the city over miles of the green loveliness of Italy in May.

Beyond Magliano the road mounts and takes to the spine of a ridge mapped like "the way of a serpent on a rock" as it stretches to the northeast to meet Monte Amiata. Many little streams have their sources in this long elevation; those on the south flowing into the Albegna, those on the north, into the Ombrone, and beautiful views lie on either hand. Through sun and shade we proceed, between the loveliest hedges in the world, for where else can one find so many delightful things growing in harmony and rejoicing together in the warmth of early spring? There are the hawthorns putting forth pink and white blossoms, the arbutus, the brier rose, and the honeysuckle coming into flower, the wild fig sending its vigorous shoots aloft and the clematis, blackberry, and ivy busily binding all together. On the white road winding between these sweet boundaries we soon begin to meet flocks of sheep starting out upon their journey to the Casentino or the Pistoiese. They are not so numerous now as they used to be, for then they thronged such long spaces that for vehicles and horses to pass was a difficult matter. It was also hard upon the sheep, and the shepherds had a way of discouraging travel—that of teaching their dogs to bite the heels of the horses encroaching upon the roads while the sheep were being moved.

A few miles beyond Magliano a pretty little town comes in sight, upon a tabled hill, most gratifyingly placed and composed. There is the white ribbon of the road encircling it and arriving with a fine sweep at its gate where upon the right hand is a short, sturdy tower and upon the left a *palazzino* with a garden and pretty loggia; beyond you see two small *campanili* and farther, at the highest point, one



Pereta.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



PERETA. THE GATEWAY

thin tower against the sky, tall, windowless, of the kind that used to be manned by a few archers, shooting through the arrow slits at the top. Thus Pereta stands nestling in olive trees and looking out upon many another hill with a glimpse of the River Castrione below. There are remains of its old wall and the usual stone-flagged streets full of supporting arches, aerial bridges, loggias, outside staircases, and stone benches. Flowers bloom in windows and iron rings are driven into the walls to hold flower pots, in the pretty Tuscan fashion. The place was never of great importance and has no crumbling palaces to show, but it is clean and self-respecting and has a little church of graceful proportions with arched doorway and rose window, built of stone whose tone is of gold and bronze marked with wide veinings of deep red, quite beautiful and striking.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Against the front of it are worn stone seats from which criminals were judged long ago. After condemnation they were placarded and tied against the wall, to be execrated, spat upon, and kicked for the twenty-four hours before their execution. Such were the gentle usages of past times. To-day kinder manners are encouraged in Pereta, and though visitors are few and their advent awakens a pardonable curiosity, it is kept well within bounds. There is no begging and the children do not crowd and press upon strangers, for at the least suggestion of overstepping the bounds of decorum a warning shout of "*O che!*" from their elders is heard and obeyed.

The Aldobrandeschi ruled Pereta in the thirteenth century, but because they refused their owed homage to the republic of Siena a band of cavalry was sent down there to bring them to account. After this, having acknowledged Siena, they kept Pereta for another hundred years till it was taken from them and divided, one half to Siena and one half to the Pope. Its importance in the fourteenth century may be estimated by the fact that "it maintained a castellan and five soldiers as a garrison." Later it passed from owner to owner by sale or by heritage, till at last the distracted people proposed to give themselves back to the Aldobrandeschi of Santa Fiora, but Francesco Minucci, who happened to own the town at that time, getting wind of this insubordination, sent a few mercenaries whom he introduced secretly into the castle and forced the people to capitulate. In the end it was turned over to the sole ownership of Siena in 1384, after which it is to be hoped the unhappy little place enjoyed more peaceful conditions for a time, though the fact that Siena never treated her dependents well gives little security for such hopes. It must have been centuries before Pereta assumed the sweet pastoral air it has to-day.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

In the afternoon of the day I arrived I wandered through the town, meaning by tortuous ways to find the foot of that tall thin tower before mentioned, which formed Pereta's apex as one views it from a distance. The street dwindled to a flinty path, and several turns of it brought me to a little terrace, close to which sprang the tower. As I faced it I stood near an open doorway in which presently appeared two young women, one blonde, one black haired. Very attractive, very fresh and comely they looked, as they smiled and came out upon the terrace to offer the hospitality of it to a stranger. Of course we talked, and after a little they invited me into their house. It was a singularly attractive home. First a large, orderly kitchen hung with shining copper, the middle of it occupied by a long table of good proportion and substantial make. Then came a spacious parlor, clean and most comfortably furnished. This was lighted by a window that overlooked the town below, and the walls of it were much adorned with primitive pictures.

My acquaintances knew something of the traditions of their village, which is not common among the dwellers in such places and they were ready to speak of them. We talked of the tower and they mentioned Nello Pannocchieschi; from that one high window at the top he had flung himself out of remorse for the death of the hapless Pia. But had he not at once married a second time, I ventured. Yes, yes, but it was true all the same, he had discovered her innocence, and self-accusation had worked in him till he could bear it no longer. They were eager in asserting their belief in the tragedy. Perhaps the only foundation for the story exists in the minds of those whose sense of justice being affronted insist upon atonement, but no doubt of it lay in the minds of these two. It was a pleasant hour I spent there and when I had left them, I looked back from the last point of the descent at which I

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

could see the western window in the high wall of their home. The fine rose color of the old brick that formed that wall was enriched by the sunset light that now suffused it, and the two pretty heads, the black and the golden, were framed in the window, from which smiling adieux were waved.

A few miles from Pereta, still following the mountain road, one passes through Scansano, brown, compact town, well placed but not interesting excepting for its two della Robbias, a charming one in the open air and a less interesting one in the church, and for its fine view. For all that it appears so buried in a labyrinth of hills I could see from Capalbio to Monte Amiata looking out of the window of one of its towers.

It may be well to note here for the benefit of searchers after the picturesque that if Scansano is approached from the north—that is directly from Grosseto—instead of from the south, the road passes by Istia d'Ombrone. This place was formerly a notorious den of bandits, but now that their day has passed it is inhabited by a busy agricultural population, inspiring no dread as one halts to admire the fine grouping of castle and dwellings it presents. Beside it the River Ombrone widens to a broad sheet of water and becomingly reflects the gray walls that on the southern boundary of the village descend into it.

Continuing the journey and still following the ridge before mentioned, the road dips after a while to the level of the Albegna River where beside it lies the forgotten little town of Roccalbegna, set like a modest jewel, shining, but not for the indiscriminate.

Its church and the houses grouped about it are fitted compactly between two pyramidal masses of rock, the one topped by a fortress, the other leveled at the summit by a villa and its garden. Precipices and avalanches of shattered stone threaten it from the rear, while in front



Roccalbegna.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

wooded hills span the horizon, leaving a small open valley for olives and vines.

It was past noon when we came in sight of it, and having started without fixed plans we were carrying food with us. It seemed prudent to pass through and at a safe distance beyond it take our meal, free of beggars and crowding children, returning afterward for further exploration. We did not yet know Roccalbegna. So we traversed the village and motored on, describing a wide semicircle and coming out upon the opposite hillside, from which there was a comprehensive view of the place, in all its daring picturesqueness. We drew up in the shade and enjoyed it. It was easy to see that Roccalbegna—in a mountain pass, with an unscalable wall at its back and a pedestal rising from a position admirably fitted for a fortress—was a point advantageous to fortify, and Siena had done it. How the materials for building were ever conveyed up the perpendicular walls upon which the castle stands is incomprehensible. The town was also enclosed, but hardly a trace of this remains beyond one gateway in a fragment of flower-draped wall.

Just outside this gate (as I later discovered) is a small chapel, apparently unused at present but containing a relic of great rarity, a hand-litter, fashioned with an elegance that reminds one of the old Roman type. The shafts are now laced with but a rough network of rope, but the legs upon which it rests are carefully modeled and the high head-and-foot-boards are carved with pilasters and mouldings which frame devotional paintings of rich color. Altogether it is a buried treasure that in its damp, unventilated retirement is not cared for as it should be.

As we were finishing our bread and excellent *pecorino*, our red wine and fruit, we descried eight adventurous little boys starting forth from the town to inspect us. They approached slowly in a compact company and halted some

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

two hundred feet away. From that point they gravely gazed at us for a while, a bright-faced, cleanly dressed little group. They ventured no nearer but appeared to be comparing opinions of us in low tones. Presently they turned and began quietly gathering wild flowers and arranging them across the smooth floor of the road which we should pass in retracing our way. They were not doing it carelessly but with method, separating the blossoms from their stems and laying them carefully in a pattern. It was pretty to watch their busy coöperation; we looked on from a distance and wondered.

The supply of sweets we liked to carry for children was low. Calculation proved it would be well to make an individual distribution lest all should not share alike. We called an invitation to the children but they were too shy to approach.

Not till we had urgently tempted them did the older ones come slowly forward. As for the youngest he had to be carried, overcome with bashfulness, in the arms of an older brother, to receive his share. After this they retired again and waited till it was time for us to cross the flowery bridge they had prepared. This we did slowly with recognition and ceremony, and the little builders watched us with smiling satisfaction and then followed us back to the town.

There we alighted and began to stroll about. With quickened interest we now paid more attention to the aspect of Roccalbegna and its population. We found the streets clean; not a beggar to be seen, and the people pleasant but not idly curious. The women, knitting or sewing in their doorways, looked up and smiled, and one, younger and more eager than the rest, questioned us. Finding we were from that fabulous land called America of which stories had reached her, she exclaimed: "And you have traveled so far and yet stop to look at Roccalbegna? I

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

should like well to travel myself!" Here she laughed merrily at so audacious a thought. With the palm of her hand upward she spread her fingers and thumb and brought them together quickly two or three times, adding significantly, "One must have the pennies!" She pursed her pretty lips and laughed again but without discontent. Framed in the crumbling stone of her gray doorway she looked a thing too fresh and flower-like for that mediæval setting. Above her head rose out of the past one of those ancient towers, straight and stark as a chimney, beyond loomed the broken castle on its crag, but just as the yellow stonecrop shone from the rent wall near her, so her beauty lighted the shadowed street and her blithe content must sweeten the lives of those about her.

Slowly we walked on and presently discovering a slim campanile beyond a congeries of roofs, its one arch holding a single bell suspended against a blue background of sky, we began to follow the turns and ascents that led toward it. We soon arrived at the foot of it for nothing can be far away in Roccalbegna, and found it standing, in the Lombard style, apart from the low, rough church to which it belonged. The door of the latter was being opportunely unlocked by a young priest. He looked a gentle welcome and also a little surprise, but was glad to let us enter the tiny sanctuary which is called the Santissimo Crocifisso, and contains as its name implies an especially holy crucifix. Large and of fine Sienese workmanship, this relic is greatly revered as it once stayed the ravages of the cholera. Every year this deliverance is commemorated, but once in four years there is a more important celebration when all the people of the village, walking barefooted, carry it in procession.

The little church was bare inside but very clean and besides the crucifix, possessed a bell which the priest wished us to hear for its beautiful tone; he rang it for us

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and it was indeed of a melodious resonance which lingered long on the air. He asked us if we had also visited the parish church and offered to go there with us. For the charm of his presence and for his sweet *lingua Toscana*, we followed him gladly. It was but a step to the piazza of which the church, with its fine severe façade broken only by an interesting portal and a large rose window, occupied one side. It is said to have been adorned with terracotta medallions in times past, but now possesses only the beauty of sombre but rich color in its stone surface, undisfigured by any application of plaster or tint. We entered the rather dark interior and found several pictures of the Sienese school. In one, Saint Peter seated erect and unbending against his dim gold background, held upright the crosier whose crook terminated in a fish with wing-like fins; while St. Paul the Hermit, with sword supported perpendicularly upon his knee, seemed listening intently to his attendant raven whose beak touched his ear. There was, too, a quaint oblique-eyed madonna—a small choice thing—inserted in a big irrelevant canvas in the strange fashion sometimes adopted, and there was little else.

Something of a different nature there was, however, that attracted the attention. Before the high altar were tables arranged so as to form three sides of a large parallelogram. They were low, and spread with white, lace-edged covers over scarlet. The celebration of first communion had just taken place, the young priest told us. It looked a more than ample board for the year's crop of little catechumens and I said so. He smiled and explained that the table was made large enough to seat not only the children of the present year, but also those who had been received the year previous. It had been a most beautiful, a most sacred day and the flowers—they were never so lovely before. That part of the pavement on the inner side of the bordering table had been quite covered.



Roccalbegna. The Castle.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

“And all with wild flowers?”

My thoughts had gone back to the little flower-gatherers on the hill.

“Yes, truly, a flower mosaic. Would I perhaps,” he asked diffidently, “care to see the diagram of the pattern?”

I expressed the gratification it would be. He flushed with pleasure and flew to fetch it from the sacristy. It was drawn upon a large sheet of white paper symmetrically with many divisions, and in the central panel a little ship and a star. This design, outlined upon the floor, had been filled in with flower-petals of many tints. He showed the colors chosen, here rose, there white, here golden, but choicest of all, the centre—the background of the little ship—that was of purest blue, all laid in petals of tiny blossoms and then when all was completed and the hour had come, there above the bright parterre sat the children, their sweet faces themselves “like unto the angelical flowers, roses and lilies, wherewith the celestial meadow is adorned.” His eyes shone as he described it.

In the slender ascetic body, in the youthful inspired face, I seemed to see the genius of the little town, the spirit that informed with gentleness the entire place, that taught both the young and the old sweet and courteous ways. Happy the children, happy the unfrequented village, where such a spirit guides!

Looking across from Roccalbegna one can see Rocchette di Fazio, pictorial from any point of view, where it hangs upon a cliff over the river. By climbing round the semi-circle of hills that borders the valley one may reach it, a little eyrie, less known, more neglected even than its neighbor, a harsh rocky bit of a stronghold denuded of its walls and castle, but commanding a prospect set with the perfection of a stage effect. At the foot of its crag the Albegna traces a most graceful curve, its clear stream fringed with trees, and opposite rise hills of perfect con-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

tour, rock and forest alternating, while behind them lie the higher mountains. It is a prospect to dream over. No hurried survey can profit one in a spot such as this, its charm must be met with tranquillity and uncounted leisure.

One threads the steep streets mainly by stairways, which I did and, at one point, came upon a tiny chapel. Though so small it was welded to the rock it stood on and constructed with a spreading foundation like a fortress. It is now unblest and degraded to the condition of a storehouse containing heaps of lime. Because its builders meant its sacredness to last forever and for the simplicity and dignity of it, one longs to return it to its first use. Its restoration would be easily accomplished; first, the commerce in cement banished, the money changers cast out of the temple, for there would then be left its unspoiled interior, the walls undisfigured by plaster or paint. I pictured a small severe altar there with one sacred picture above it, and there should be a Santa Cristina, in whose care the village appears to have been left, and no tawdriness tolerated anywhere. Perhaps it would give comfort to the simple people of these hills and on festival days its rough pavement would be carpeted with flowers, candles would burn on the little altar, and kneeling figures fill the floor space.

As I sat on a low parapet near it, pleasing myself with thoughts of its rescue an old woman stepped out of a doorway opposite and smilingly handed me three pink roses, begging me to accept them "from an old woman very near eternity." Her bearing was so friendly, her manner so blithe, and yet in the poverty of that little hamlet the unworthy thought came that some return for such a courtesy might be looked for. We greeted each other, I thanked her, and presently I led up to the offer of a bit of personal adornment, a bright kerchief for Sunday wear perhaps?



Rocchette di Fazio.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

She laughed gayly and with a wave of her hand exclaimed, "No, no, keep it for some younger woman, I am far too ugly!" and so disappeared into her little house, leaving me rebuked but not unhappy, glad to realize the independent spirit that lives where the thoughtless tourist seldom comes to misunderstand and corrupt.

Campagnatico and Paganico are two interesting towns lying three miles apart in the valley of the Ombrone and easily seen during a day's excursion from Grosseto though they may also be approached from the north. A little to the east of Grosseto one crosses the river at Istia d'Ombrone and reaches Campagnatico after winding fifteen miles through hills haunted by charcoal burners. It is set high above the river on a scarp of the mountains. Once it was a valued stronghold, massively built, nearly impregnable; now smooth mounds or torn fragments show the circle of its ancient walls, and the robust church of San Giovanni on the verge of the steep above the river is almost threatening in its likeness to a fortalice rather than a sanctuary.

The town is of great age having been of note as far back as the tenth century, as a possession of the Aldobrandeschi along with the rest of the Maremma. When Siena, in the middle of the thirteenth century, began her struggle to bring that prepotent family under her authority, four turbulent brothers of the house were making commerce impossible along the roads leading southward. Robber barons like their forbears, they preyed upon all travelers, and Siena and Orvieto put aside their perennial enmity and joined hands against them. One of these brothers was Guglielmo, Dante's "*Gran Tosco*," and it was his son, Umberto, whose name is especially connected with Campagnatico. "A youth of great courage and valorous" one of the old chroniclers calls him, but as he grew older he became to the last degree violent, arrogant, and cruel. He

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

refused to come to terms with Siena; on the contrary, he defied her, and, entrenching himself in Campagnatico, added all the strength possible to the walls, and gathering about him a band of warriors, continued vigorously to follow the favorite pursuit of the family. To his other qualities he added a craftiness that disguised the responsibility for much of his marauding. Nursing always a fervor of hatred toward Siena he seems to have cared more for the satisfaction of outraging and murdering her traveling citizens than for the enjoyment of boasting of his triumphs. As an example of this the following story is related of him.

One day a number of young nobles left Siena for a hunting party in the Maremma. Umberto, who contrived to be informed of every such happening, took care to have a band of his followers stationed in a favorable position upon the road they were sure to take. On the second day, as the hunters (quite unsuspectingly, for there happened at this time to be a temporary peace between Siena and Campagnatico) came gayly toward the ambush, they were suddenly attacked. Although taken at a disadvantage they fought with such spirit that they succeeded in defending themselves and at last putting their foes to flight. After this, hot with indignation, they galloped back to Siena and loudly demanded that instant vengeance be visited upon the false Umberto.

At this moment Siena's hands were full and to despatch fighting men on this errand was out of the question. Messengers, however, were sent with stern requirement of an explanation. Umberto with his usual cunning professed deep regret for what had occurred, declared the attack to have been unauthorized by him, and promised that the offenders should be suitably punished. Thereupon he actually had several of his own men executed, announcing in Campagnatico that this penalty was exacted by reason



Istia d'Ombone.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



CAMPAGNATICO. CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI BATTISTA

of their lack of success, while abroad he declared they had suffered for their vicious and unwarranted attack upon the esteemed citizens of a friendly town. A statement to this effect was drawn up and sent to Siena in the hands of pompous ambassadors accompanied by a numerous suite. This company also bore with it two or three horses and a few weapons which had been left by the Sienese upon the field where the fighting took place.

All this did not deceive Siena, but as it was politic at the

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

time not to proceed to hostilities, a new treaty of peace as valuable as the former one was signed, after which Umberto continued to conduct himself precisely as before. For example, not very long afterward a noble of Siena, with his daughter and a small escort, left the city for a point on the Maremma to the south of Campagnatico. They did not return was nor anything to be ascertained concerning their disappearance. It was for a time considered that the whole party must have been destroyed by wolves, who then infested that part of Tuscany, but, later, a disaffected retainer of Umberto brought proof that both father and daughter had been abducted and, after shocking ill treatment, had been killed.

Thus matters proceeded and we read that "he held in tribulation the whole Maremma." When he could be endured no longer, Siena, reinforced by many whom he had outraged, moved against him. Umberto prepared for them and held out as long as untiring vigilance and gallant fighting could serve, but, at length, the besiegers carried the place by storm. They forced an entry, they poured into the streets, beating back all resistance. There was no further hope, but Umberto spurned the thought of surrender. To yield would mean to be led a captive to Siena, to be triumphed over, to be tortured, and to die a death of ignominy. Armed from head to foot, he lashed himself upon his armored horse. A very centaur of bronze he must have looked. His avenging foes crowded shouting into the piazza, there he confronted them and for a brief moment they recoiled at the sight of him, then with a great cry they set upon him, a plunging, struggling mass. Desperately he fought and before they made an end of him he had slaughtered many. His horse was killed and fell under him, and still he raved defiance and hewed with fury at those nearest him, till, at last, borne down by numbers, he was slain. So it was he chose death; guilt-stained



Paganico. Porta Gorella.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

but indomitable, there he lay, a warrior killed, not conquered.

In Purgatory, Dante meets him among that group of stooping figures bearing enormous stones. So bent is he, so heavily laden, that he mourns his inability to raise his head even so far as to see whether he recognizes the poet. His arrogance is subdued. The fierce warrior submits in patience to the punishment of the proud.

"I was Italian," he says, "born of a great Tuscan, Guglielmo Aldobrandesco was my father. I know not whether you have heard his name."

Thus humble is he even concerning the fame of his princely house.

It was in the year 1259 that Umberto met his death, and thereafter his stout city suffered the scourges of war and malaria till it fell into ruin and was almost completely abandoned. Thus it languished till in the eighteenth century, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Leopoldo I, brought it back to life. He saw the rich soil below it lying untilled. He recognized the advantages of its high position and of the winds which drew through the river valley for the control of malaria, and with energy and generosity he made it again habitable. The memorials of its warlike history did not interest him, perhaps there were few to save. At present one of its towered gateways much tamed and remodeled holds the broad, conspicuous face of the town clock so loved by the Tuscans of to-day.

I cannot help fancying the earlier spirit of the place persists to a certain degree. On my arrival I was at once surrounded by children who clung like burs, largely boisterous and unruly little boys who followed and jostled and even profaned the church with their noisy pranks, heedless of the loud rebukes hurled at them by the plump and testy priest who was doing the honors of Campagnatico. The church we were visiting at the moment was San Giovanni

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Battista, that of the stern, high-shouldered presence and the broken tower, of which mention was made before. We stood looking at some frescoes by Bartolo di Fredi in the choir, primitive and vigorous presentations of the story of the Virgin, but presently we stepped outside and stood against the back of the apse, from which point we saw the Ombrone flowing far below, green as beryl between steep green hills. We could trace its windings to the tall gateway of Paganico, three miles away, and thither we went a little later.

Before Paganico the Ombrone spreads out in pebbly shallows and broad still pools, and from its banks rise the pictorial walls of the town, half embowered in green, while, on all sides, wooded hills shut in the narrow valley. In the bushes beside the river nightingales make vocal even the mornings in the month of May; the spring is too intoxicating, and they cannot wait till evening to take part in the beauty about them. One is beguiled into loitering there to listen and gaze before entering the town. As I sat in the shade there came slowly down the flowery path bordering the bank a young woman; a single glance showed her to be a rebuke to idleness. Judge if she did not display industry and versatility. She carried twin babies, one on either arm, a child of four clung to her skirt, her hands were busy with knitting, and she drove before her five geese. The geese, intolerably tempted by the ditch at one side of the path, gave her trouble; undaunted she surmounted it; yet she was not a stern person, but willing to stop and chat with idle wayfarers, and answer their odd questions which show such ignorance. We talked of the advantages of Paganico as against those of Campagnatico. We could see the latter where it looked down at us from its height. I heard that malaria was less dreaded now; that geese were in danger from predatory animals out of the woods so close by; but that travelers—and here she smiled

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

—need no longer dread the “Padrone of Paganico”; that last, however, is a story that must be told later.

Looking about me I could comprehend what malaria must have been there in the past for the bottom of the valley lies but a few feet above sea level. Tradition says that in the time of the Romans this curse was looked upon as neither a warning nor a punishment, but simply as the whim of a capricious goddess. The tormented people therefore decided to erect a temple in the hope of propitiating her, and they inscribed upon it:

PAGANICO POPULO

DIVÆ MÆPHITÆ

SAC

But the goddess disdained them; there was no relief, the population sickened or fled away, and the settlement became ruinous and was abandoned; so that when, in the tenth century, the followers of the Emperor Otto, coming down from the north, arrived upon the spot they found it deserted. Discovering among the remains of the fallen temple to the implacable goddess a portion of the inscription, they accepted the first word as the name of the place, not recognizing its meaning to be merely the rustic population, the tillers of the soil. If the reader will not accept this legend he may begin with the Ardengheschi, first feudal lords of the region, who were established in Paganico in the thirteenth century but who lost it to Siena in 1278. Its acquisition was of great advantage to Siena who made it her southern boundary, strongly fortified it and began attempts to drain the surrounding marshes.

All this added greatly to the importance of Paganico but also caused it to be the victim of a long series of sieges, sacks, and burnings. In 1328, the town had to deal with

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Castruccio himself, who on the way to take Montemassi for the detested Emperor Ludovico, found himself resisted by little Paganico, garrisoned at that time by a band of mercenaries in the pay of Siena. He soon reduced it, but, it is said, did it no great harm and after occupying it for a few days left it to proceed to Montemassi which he also subdued, but was presently obliged to leave, having placed a garrison there. These two triumphs were more than Siena could bear and she called upon her Captain of War, Guidoriccio da Fogliano, to retrieve these losses. This he did and came back covered with glory. Siena received him with the wildest demonstrations of joy and this particular exploit is commemorated in Simone Martini's splendid fresco on the wall of the Sala di Consiglio where Guidoriccio, calm and confident, sallies forth upon his grandly caparisoned steed to the victory he is sure of.

Other attacks Paganico suffered but before the middle of the sixteenth century it enjoyed a series of prosperous years. For its loyalty to Siena it was especially favored. Great magazines of grain from the rich soil about it stood within its walls and much treasure in gold coin was also stored there. In their remote valley the people must have felt security and enjoyment, believing that, after all, civilization had progressed and times and manners ameliorated.

If this pleasant illusion existed, it lasted but till the year 1555. Then the Province of Siena was to be conquered and this was to be executed with thoroughness. Marignano, heading the forces of Cosimo dei Medici, appeared before the walls of Paganico. The brave little town refused to surrender; it was heroically defended, but it fell, and as a penalty for its resistance, was treated with dreadful barbarity. Word went forth that no quarter should be given. The inhabitants desperately fought for their lives, the streets ran red with blood, and as the slaughter proceeded

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

it was lighted by the fire of burning buildings. It could not have lasted long. Paganico is small; and in the morning only black smoke rose from the ruins under which the bodies of its people were buried.

Time has smoothed away all these horrors; the town has been rebuilt, and there is nothing to remind one of the past excepting certain breaches in the walls, which, in spite of all the assaults upon them, still stand. They form a severe rectangle reinforced by many square towers and divided by four gates, two of them complete, two partly ruinous. Entering by the western portal, you find yourself upon an empty weed-grown piazza, bordered with stone benches, under the insufficient shade of thin trees. The church of San Michele stands here, substantial and squarely towered. Within it is spacious, clean, and vacant; the floor is of brick and the hewn timbers of the roof are strapped with iron in the gable. During the two leisurely visits I paid its interior, not even a sacristan appeared and the cool seclusion was very pleasant for there are interesting pictures and frescoes to examine. Over the portal hangs a madonna and saints, of much charm, by Andrea di Niccolo, unspoiled by restoration. There is, too, an Adoration of the Magi by Cozzarelli, and in the choir quaint and beautiful frescoes by Bartolo di Fredi. One set of panels portrays the judgment after death. Two souls, with clasped imploring hands, are weighed by a colossal angel, with unmoved countenance, while on the right appears a terrifying representation of the devil and the cavernous entrance to hell. On the left are grouped the saved, whose prayers take visible form above their heads as clusters of lilies.

Passing beyond church and piazza the main street lies straight as an arrow from gate to gate. It is partly arcaded and lined with good and simple houses. No evidences of past grandeur remain, no façades of palaces, which, if they ever existed, were doubtless destroyed when the town was

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

so wickedly laid waste. Paganico is sparsely populated but it is a cleanly decent little place, free of beggars, and its inconspicuous inn takes excellent care of travelers, so that no reason is discoverable for the contemptuous expression sometimes used in Siena by those excited to denunciation, "You were born among the bushes of Paganico!" (*Già sei nato nelle macchie di Paganico.*) That eccentric foreigners are seldom seen at the inn just mentioned was evident by the bearing of the hostess' family. The little maid who served us was of a rabbit-like shyness, the small brother gloomed upon us from afar but fled from friendly advances. However, an excellent meal was served us at noon. Shortly afterward one of our party of four, passing through the lower story, came upon the united family grouped about a table. Care sat upon their brows so that, being a sociable and sympathetic person, he lingered to find out the cause. As he afterward described it, "They were writing down, item by item, the account for the food just served us. They had reached a total of four *lire* and sixty *centesimi*, when I exclaimed magnificently, 'Make it five *lire* and the Signora will not utter a complaint!'" In awestruck silence the new figure was inscribed and the account was paid, as had been promised.

After this the *padrona* with cheerful alacrity offered the best bedroom for an hour of rest. It was a small, neat room upon which it was evident she justly prided herself. In it there was an elaborate dresser and also a paneled wardrobe of gigantic proportions which must have been built in the room. The bed, with one cotton pillow and one straw one, was spread with fresh linen sheets and grandly adorned with a yellow counterpane covered with crochet lace. Above it hung a crucifix and upon the opposite wall a framed sampler, not at all unlike some I have seen embellishing the walls of cottages in New England. After a time, with strength reinforced by the hospitality of this

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

bower, I went forth again to revisit the church and stroll through the quaint streets.

While I loitered and gazed about I was filled, as so often before in like places, with an ardent curiosity, a longing to know what these silent house fronts, these broken walls, nay, the very paving stones, could tell me if they would but become articulate. It was not difficult to read that Paganico had a notable and exciting story to tell, so much at least was written plainly. I fancied I could hear the faint echo of trumpets blown from the towers, the noise of battle, the crash of falling stones when the gates burst inward, the enemy rushed through and swords were reddened with the blood of the helpless. Further than mere conjecture I could not go. I thought despondently, what record could I ever find of a forgotten village like this hidden among woods and hills? But just at that moment there dropped from the clouds a gentleman with a manuscript in his hand. He must have approached in that manner for it is certain he was not there a moment before and now he stood opposite me with a modest, hospitable air and asked if I was perhaps interested in Paganico and would like to know something of its history.

Accepting this encounter as calmly as I could and realizing that I was walking in fairyland, I assured him that he judged rightly. He then confided to me that having a bent for research he had compiled a little account of his native town, and as he showed it to me I noted that the carefully written pages were fortified with learned citations. He then offered to intrust the manuscript to me and furthermore, to allow me to carry it away and return it when I chose. He asked for no reward, no pledge, and treated his proffer as simply as though he were lending a printed book to an old friend. I tried to express my indebtedness which he mildly deprecated and we talked a little of Paganico, its fortunes in the past and its tranquil-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

lity in the present. When we parted I walked on, rejoiced but bewildered, pondering upon the pleasant world I lived in and happily realizing that anything might happen in Italy.

The above is a true story and if any carping reader refuses to believe in a direct descent from the clouds such as I have described, I can only say that to my dazzled vision the beginning of that interview was thus glorified.

Distances in Paganico are short and in my further explorations I very soon found myself at one of its boundaries, looking forth from the crumbling gateway upon the placid river and the long shadows beyond, that were beginning to darken the steep ravines in the hills. Outside lay a pretty path leading along a space of the town wall which was here painted with lichens and lent its support to many succulent plants growing up against it with all the energy of spring in their vigorous shoots and tendrils. I had already begun to experience a vague sensation of having lived long in Paganico so it was without surprise that I perceived an acquaintance of the morning not far away. It was the woman I have already described as having been simultaneously engaged in such a variety of occupations. This time she had with her only the child of four and was busily gathering something from the bushes beside the path. I joined her and found she was filling a little basket with snails. There seemed to be an unlimited quantity and she plucked them from the leaves rapidly and rather daintily, laying hold of them by their little round shells. In the first moment I caught my breath at the thought of eating just this form of life, but then I reflected that, looked at impartially, these small white snails feeding upon green leaves might be considered far less unappetizing than a mass of crawling gray shrimps which we accept as desirable food and I resolved to be tolerant and hospitable to new ideas.

Meantime my companion, sociably inclined, as earlier in



Paganico.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

the day, suspended her work and looked ready for conversation, so I approached the subject of the story which she had before hinted at and begged her to tell me more of that famous outlaw the Padrone of Paganico. She smiled at me and gave a little sigh. "Poor Baicche!" she said. "He was bad, Signora, but not so very bad. He was young and what happened crazed him." We sat down together under an alder beside the river and she related his story which ran as follows:

He began life as a shoemaker in Siena where he unhappily fell in love with a young married woman. After a time they agreed to leave the city secretly and establish themselves far away where they were unknown. Baicche prepared everything accordingly, giving up his shop and selling his equipment. All was ready for flight and the hour of departure fixed. Baicche waited long at the meeting place. The night wore on, but his inamorata, fickle or faint-hearted, did not appear. The following day he with difficulty had speech with her. She met him coldly, she had changed her mind. He was confounded; he appealed, he implored, but to no purpose and at length rushed away baffled and desperate. His shop given up, his occupation broken, he could not face his old life and full of fury and bitterness took refuge in the woods where he nursed his injury till it turned to a passion of revenge.

The woman who had failed him realized her danger and for a whole year kept within her house. Baicche was never too far away to know this and to keep his fierce watch. At last her caution relaxed, she ventured forth to the washing pool. A sudden gun shot, and she dropped dead beside the basin. Baicche was summoned to appear at court but defied the authorities and successfully concealed himself. In the neighborhood of Paganico among the hills and woods along the Ombrone he chose his field of operations and in time became known as the Padrone

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

of Paganico. He levied tribute as his predecessors in brigandage had done but on no such large scale; times had changed and he made merely a living. In those days farm agents still reserved a column in their bookkeeping for "*Girelloni*" of his kind, a recognized expense of estates, but the amounts they paid over were small.

It is said that after some years Baicche decided to strike once for all for a large sum and then to renounce robbery, quit Italy, and begin life in a new country. He therefore made a heavy demand upon the agent of a rich proprietor but to his chagrin it was refused. Soon after upon a lonely road in the forest he met a man whom he took to be the *padrone* and challenged him. The man terrified and stammering tried to convince Baicche of the mistake and of his own identity but the bandit, disbelieving, shot and wounded him and then left him where he lay. The unfortunate victim was picked up soon after and lingered some time between life and death, but finally recovered. A new suit was brought against Baicche, but as before he failed to appear. This time a more thorough search was made and in the end he was captured and tried. The woods of Paganico know him no more and the country people cannot tell whether he still languishes behind the walls of that huge prison which frowns from the heights of Volterra, but they whisper to one another that Baicche was wont to swear he would never remain alive in captivity.





SAN ANTIMO. THE OUTSIDE STAIRCASE

CHAPTER VI

MONTALCINO



TRAVELING from Siena toward the southwest and passing through Buonconvento, a secondary road turns out of the highway and carries one westward toward Montalcino. Before or after ascending to it one should not fail to see the famous old monastery of San Antimo lying in a quiet hollow of the foothills, peacefully dreaming of the time when it was a mighty Benedictine foundation and greatly important in the life of the city above it. The feet of the faithful seldom tread the paths that lead to it now, silence has settled upon it, and yet no air of neglect pervades it. Pleasant fields lie about it with gnarled olives here and there, a group of hayricks stands not far away, and against

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

the apse flourishes a cypress whose dark, compact green is threaded by the delicate foliage of a deciduous tree beside it. The noble interior, of great height, unencumbered and full of light, is of travertine and "agated alabaster," warm and golden, and shows its French derivation. The ambulatory, with radiating chapels, is most interesting; so also are the details of roof, architrave, column, and capital. One column is inscribed with the date 1118; the decoration of a capital shows a design of fighting lions; another bears rams' heads, the joined horns giving the outline of festoons; in another grotesque animals sport under a lovely wreath of alabaster.

On the exterior of the building one finds many arches, large and small, some walled up, some still free; opposite three small ones that open near the ground, with graceful colonnettes, is a well-head of unusual size and there is also a fine stone staircase. As it stands there, fair and sunlit against a green background, San Antimo is as beautiful a relic of the past as exists in Italy.



SAN ANTIMO



San Antimo.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Hardly a city of the high hills looks so seated in the clouds as Montalcino; there is a magnificence in the way it lies against the sky that is scarcely equalled by any other. Its profile is in sight long before the climb to it begins, and the very look of it explains the struggle of those who wished to control it.

To ascend the height it crowns, you pass between tall poplars, cypresses, and ancient olives till, sweeping round to the south, you enter it as you should, directly under the walls of its fortress. From this summit it looks into three valleys, those of the Orcia, the Ombrone, and the Asso, and so commands one of the most beautiful and wide-spreading of all Tuscan prospects. Innumerable hills, vales, and streams are mapped below it and white ribbon-like roads wind among them, while above all lies Monte Amiata, which with its long, gracious slopes mantled with chestnuts broods above southern Tuscany.

The principal street of Montalcino follows the crest of the hill, and one passes the small picture gallery in the Piazza Margherita and the extraordinarily tall, thin *municipio*, with its slim clock tower. There are churches to be visited and the monastery of San Francesco has some interesting frescoes and a charming Andrea della Robbia. From the ruined castle one may see the beautiful profile of the suppressed convent of the Osservanti, where there is an assumption by Girolamo di Benevento.

There is little left of the mediæval period of the town excepting a few towers much shortened; the architecture and art of the place, belonging to a later period, are mainly Sienese. It is a clean, breeze-swept city very pleasant to sojourn in, and it has an excellent inn, Il Giglio, where you may be made comfortable for a long or a short stay and enjoy charming views from its little bedroom windows.

In speaking of its early history Repetti remarks, "Many persons for the love of boasting a remote origin

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

have related things concerning Montalcino that make the eyebrows to arch with amazement"; he recites heroic tales of Roman and Gallic battles and misty records of its early Christian occupation; but however legendary all this may be, we know that it had a Longobard period, and that in the Middle Ages it belonged to the neighboring abbey of San Antimo before the bad behavior of the monks attached to that foundation caused a change of face, with the result that the Bishop of Montalcino ruled San Antimo instead.

In spite of being at some distance from the great Via Francigena, the highway through Italy of conquerers and commerce, Montalcino never enjoyed for long an unobserved or tranquil existence; she was too conspicuously set, too admirably placed for fortification, and as time went on, not being strong enough for more than nominal independence, she was ardently desired by both the Tuscan rivals, Florence and Siena. To the latter she was naturally allied by position and was of great importance, for she commanded the Sienese territory of the Maremma; but Florence claimed her and persistently schemed to get possession of her. During the long wars between Florence and Siena that filled most of the thirteenth century, Montalcino frequently suffered, but, most of all, in 1201, when the two eternal enemies entered for once into an alliance. Florence had resolved to seize the brave little town of Semifonte; Siena coveted Montalcino, at this time trying to maintain her independence. A base agreement was entered into, that neither should interfere with the other until these purposes were carried out. Siena therefore laid siege to Montalcino; the people desperately defended themselves till arms and food were exhausted, but at last the Sienese with the aid of a troop of Florentines carried the place, after which they destroyed the fortifications.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Some verses written by a citizen-poet of the unhappy town have been preserved, and he writes of it thus:

"With obdurate heart Siena has destroyed Montalcino, has laid low her walls, her gates, her towers, has burned her houses, and all is ruin"; yet, in continuing, the poet humbly praises the compassion of the victors in that they spared the lives of the inhabitants though they might so easily have put them all to the sword! Siena had triumphed, but a few years later there was a day when the Sienese themselves suffered terrible humiliation, for the Florentines came against them, the men of Siena rushed forth to defend their city and certain of their brave women went with them and fought beside them; it was of no avail; they were beaten back, the Florentines burst in and rushed through the streets killing as they went and when at night the battle was over they had carried away with them many beautiful Sienese women, whom they forced to become their mistresses; and Villani tells us in his chronicle that a Florentine knight had hung his shield on the very gate of Siena in token of victory.

After this, Siena could no longer hold Montalcino, so the coveted town went into the hands of Florence. This was in 1233; in 1252 Siena tried to retake it but without success; three years later she had again to recognize the so-called independence of Montalcino, and even go through the absurd form of an affectionate reconciliation with Florence, one condition of which was that Montalcino should not be used by either party as a refuge for rebels. Of course, neither side had any intention of abiding by this treaty, and Montalcino continued to be the subject of bitterest discord, Florence as often as possible promoting hostility to Siena, and Siena struggling to make good her claim to the important town, attempts in which she was usually unsuccessful.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

These were dark days for Siena; the fortunes of the Ghibellines were at a low ebb, but the tide was near the turning. In two years Manfred appeared and with his swift series of victories in the south his Tuscan adherents were heartened. The Sienese sent to ask for his help and began to gain successes against the Florentines; in the summer of 1259, just before the great battle beside the Arbia, knowing that Florence had again succeeded in persuading Montalcino to take sides against them, they determined to attack it; and with an army strengthened by reinforcements sent by Manfred, they marched southward and laid siege to it.

The Florentines, who had been making ready for war, hearing of this move and greatly fearing the capture of Montalcino, set forth to relieve it and punish the Sienese. Marching south by the valley of the Pesa, instead of proceeding directly to Montalcino, they encamped among the barren hills along the River Arbia, and sent envoys to Siena bearing insolent messages. "Throw down your walls that we may enter where it pleases us," they scornfully demanded and they proceeded no farther toward Montalcino, but waited there beside the river that was so soon to run red with their blood. On the fourth of September, in this year of 1260, the Sienese came forth to meet them and utterly routed them in the memorable battle of Montaperti.

The account of this battle belongs to the history of Siena and it has been too eloquently described to be retold here, but after the great and hardly hoped-for victory over the Florentines had taken place on that famous field, there was fear and trembling in Montalcino, for its citizens knew they had been the immediate cause of the conflict, and this Siena would not forgive, even in the hour of victory. They debated what course to pursue and it was decided to send messages owning their fault and begging for



Montalcino. The Osservanza.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

forgiveness. So a deputation, numbering four hundred, set forth and, with hearts heavy with apprehension, traveled to Siena. Led by their priests they entered the city in penitential robes, barefooted, with halters about their necks, and as they passed through the streets they chanted lugubriously:

“Have mercy upon us for the love of God and of the Virgin Mary. We implore ye to pardon us and receive us as dead men!”

When they reached the Campo the men of Siena at first gave them furious looks; many would have fallen upon them to beat and kick them, but these were restrained, and presently it was said to them:

“Go down to the field of Montaperti where the valorous and intrepid men of Siena died and where stood the *carroccio* with our victorious standard, so that you may behold what desolation you have caused, and there do you remain till you are forgiven for the great wickedness you are guilty of.”

Then the men of Montalcino hung their heads and they left the city and went to the battlefield. There they looked upon a dreadful sight, for the ground was strewn with dead men and dead horses and the stench was so terrible it could hardly be borne; and they remained there two days and more, being commanded to bury the dead. At the end of that time they were permitted to return to Siena, and received gracious pardon from the potent and magnificent Commune of Siena and their citizenship was restored to them. Furthermore, they received permission to rebuild their city of Montalcino and to live there as before, and with this they were dismissed that they might return to their homes; and they did so and built up their town again, only a little smaller than it was before. After this they were all true and faithful sons of the Commune of Siena.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

The defeat of the Florentines at the battle of Montaperti had caused them to give up all claim to Montalcino. As the years went on the town became, as the old historian declares, warmly loyal to Siena, so that when, in 1555, that unhappy commune fell before the combined attack of the imperial forces and those of Cosimo dei Medici after a siege of merciless cruelty hardly exceeded in all history, it was the people of Montalcino who opened their arms to her and made their mountain top the last refuge of those who fled at the surrender of their beloved city, refusing to bow the neck to the detested Spanish yoke.

But before this much was to happen. All through the sixteenth century there were wars and rumors of wars; when, in 1526, Italy became the battleground of the pontiff and the emperor, and Siena was actually attacked by the papal army allied with Florence, she could but appeal for help to the imperial power. The response was prompt; in 1536 Charles V, making a ceremonial entry into the city, was received with wild enthusiasm.

He lost no time in distributing places of trust to his Spaniards, and he exhorted the Sienese to cease their internal disagreements and trust to his direction of their affairs; but since Siena continued as turbulent and disorderly as she had always been, he presently decided to build a fortress by means of which the contending parties could be better controlled. The place for it was chosen where the pleasant gardens of the Lizza now are.

Huge and threatening it began to loom, and the alarmed Sienese protested, but the famous Mendoza, who was in command under the emperor at that time, went forward steadily with the work, tearing down the ancient towers of the city to serve as material for the new fortress. "If the towers will not serve pull down the palaces," said the emperor. This was too much; the Sienese broke out in open rebellion, they renounced their allegiance to the

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

emperor, and called upon the King of France for assistance. Throughout the *contado* the spirit of resistance was rife, and in July, 1552, an army of Sienese exiles appeared before the walls to lend their help, and it was known that French reinforcements were not far away. The insurrection burst into flame, the gates were thrown open to the arriving patriots, and the Spanish garrison retreated to the new stronghold under showers of stones flung by the women. There it remained during the negotiations which followed; these were short, and when the mighty portal of the fortress swung open, that the imperial soldiers might come forth and march out of the city, all Siena was gathered there to look on. It is said that before the end of the retreating column was out of sight a mighty shout went up from the Sienese, and, as the Spaniards turned at the sound, they saw the people, with one accord, rush toward the hated building to destroy it; men, women, and children fell with fury upon it, they beat and tore at the stones, and the great structure seemed to quake and crumble under their hands. In a few days the work of many a long month was demolished.

This was in August, 1552. A great weight was lifted from the spirits of all in Siena, enemies embraced, old quarrels were forgotten; they spent the pleasant autumn in jubilation and amusement; banqueting, dancing, hunting, went on week after week, while they forgot the warning that the defeated imperial general had pronounced as he left the gate of the city, "Have a care, you have offended too great a man," words listened to with a smile but remembered afterward. When the new year came, Charles V had sent his army to punish them; his implacable general, Don Garzia di Toledo, coming up from the south, was laying waste the *contado* and besieging their valued Montalcino, while the town was holding out bravely.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Don Garzia dragged his six little cannon up to an eminence opposite the *rôcca*, planted them firmly there, and began to batter the walls. For the whole of a day the town was subjected to a terrific bombardment, but at night the only casualty was a scratch on the arm of Giordano their governor, caused by a splinter of rock. The enemy also attempted to mine under the walls, but fortune favored those within, for when, after great labor, the besiegers had unsettled the corner of a tower it fell outward and killed a number of the assailants while, thereafter, countermines met any renewed attempt. More than once there were efforts to corrupt the garrison and one such incident is thus described.

While with all vigilance the walls of Montalcino were being watched, a plot was discovered that came near to succeeding, and truly it was frustrated more by divine Providence than by the aid of man. There was in the garrison a certain sergeant, whose brother served in the besieging army outside. This brother, directed by his commander, secretly made known to the sergeant that if he would open a gate in the outer wall to the enemy he would receive such a reward as would enrich him for his life. The sergeant, being a traitor at heart, agreed to this, and on the first night that it was his turn to keep guard at the gate nearest the *rôcca*, he took an impression in wax of the key and sent the same to the imperial commander who had it carried by a trusty messenger to Montepulciano where a counterfeit key was made from it. Now, during this time, a most crafty artilleryman made his way into the town and was taken before Signor Giordano who questioned him as to whence he came. The man said he had deserted from the enemy camp, where he had been harshly treated and nearly starved and he begged to be employed within the city. Giordano was suspicious of his honesty and so told him. The artillery-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

man, swearing he was loyal, urged that he might be put to the proof. He was taken to the *rôcca* and told to fire upon the besiegers which he did several times and with such good aim that he killed certain of the assailants at each shot! The governor now began to have faith in him and seeing that he was skilful in his work, appointed him to a post in the fortress, for which he declared himself most grateful. The man's secret instructions were that when those outside had entered the gate and he heard shouts of "*Impero! Impero!*" he was to spike all the cannon in the *rôcca*.

Meanwhile the sergeant had orders that on the next night his turn came to serve at the gate he should place a small light in a crevice on the outside of the wall where it could be seen by the enemy but not by any one within. So, when that night arrived, he went to the gate with his twenty soldiers, taking with him also his servant, the only man knowing to the plot. After about an hour, he sent away the soldiers, saying they might go and rest for a time, for he well knew they were heavy with sleep and he would willingly keep the watch three or four hours in their place. As soon as they had departed, he set his servant to act as sentinel and himself placed the signal light on the outer wall. And now it was that omnipotent God inspired the guard whose duty it was to make the round of the walls on this particular night to start forth upward of three hours earlier than was his wont. He came to the gate soon after the light had been set and found only the sergeant there and, marveling at this, demanded to know the reason why so important a post was being kept by one man alone. The sergeant began to explain that he had sent his soldiers away to rest, but the guard suspected treason, and, full of rage, came near to killing him. Sending instantly to the piazza for men, and having posted them at the gate, he hurried away to

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

inform the governor. Giordano was found to be undressing to go to bed, but he quickly clothed and armed himself and the two made great speed back to the gate.

During this time the sergeant had pulled down the signal and, assisted by his servant, had let himself down outside the wall by a rope and escaped. Thus when the governor arrived, the traitor had disappeared and his servant was in the act of pulling up the rope. Giordano fell upon him and threatening to have him executed upon the spot, the terrified man confessed the whole plot and gave information concerning the artilleryman also. While this was going on the artilleryman, all unaware, was waiting for the signal to spike the guns, but Giordano, appearing suddenly at the place, seized him before he could be warned and soon discovered the steel implements for spiking the guns sewed into the sleeves of his doublet.

Afterward both these men, the sergeant's underling together with the artilleryman, were hanged from the very battlement over which the sergeant himself had been lowered the night before.

At this point the reader may be inclined to doubt whether, as the devout chronicler opines, divine Providence ordained the close of this episode, since the unhappy servant, having saved his master's life, is left to suffer the death so richly deserved by that arch-traitor.





MONTALCINO. A GATEWAY

CHAPTER VII

MONTALCINO II



MONTALCINO continued to hold out stoutly but not without much suffering from hunger, even the women laboring side by side with the men; and once, these women hearing their governor was considering yielding up the town, went to him in a body and remonstrated declaring they would rather a thousand times be buried under the ruins of their own walls than surrender to the enemies of Siena.

The siege stretched itself out till it had reached eighty days; then one morning the people, very hungry and weary, beheld a strange sight: Don Garzia's camp was in disorder, soldiers were shifting from place to place, beasts were being loaded, the very cannon were being moved.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

What had happened? Could it be possible the siege was to be raised? They crowded to the walls with beating hearts and with wild speculation watched the astonishing spectacle. Soon it was seen to be true, the army was in motion, it was marching, it was headed down the mountain. Suddenly all the people went mad with joy, they shouted, they embraced each other, and then they ran to collect every musical instrument, every drum the town afforded; but this was not enough, any object that could contribute noise was added, housewives brought their brazen kettles, the children snatched basins and frying-pans and all flew again to the walls; never did the army of an emperor retreating from an humble town like Montalcino receive a salute such as fell upon the ears of Don Garzia's departing soldiers. Every one blew or beat upon his instrument adding his voice in shouts and gibes, and I fancy that many an excellent kitchen utensil was rendered useless on that day.

When the army was at a safe distance and no ruse could longer be suspected, the people flocked out to gather up what had been left behind, for, in the hurry of departure, much food and heaps of ammunition had been abandoned. Added to this, all the dwellers roundabout the mountain came running joyfully to bring bread, meat, and wine to the townspeople. It was a glorious day, and, that night, the Sienese saw the light of great bonfires in the direction of Montalcino and wondered. It was the signal of the retreat of the imperial army, and the freedom of the dauntless little town. Only later was it learned that the emperor had received news that the Turkish fleet was on its way to attack Naples and had sent to order Don Garzia instantly to raise the siege and march to defend the south. The Sienese also celebrated the release with processions to the *duomo* to give thanks and with noisy military demonstrations, but the respite was to be short,



Montalcino. The Castle.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and sobered Siena, realizing it, appealed to France, for there was war between Henry II and the Emperor, Charles V, at this time.

The French king, willing to keep a hand upon Italy, sent them as commander-in-chief a man who thirsted to go on this mission, Piero Strozzi, Florentine exile, and deadly enemy of Cosimo dei Medici, in whose prisons his father had died. Coming with his French soldiers he was joined by the Florentine exiles of Rome whose banner bore the motto *LIBERTÀ VO CERCANDO CH'È SI CARA*. Cosimo, furious at the choice of Strozzi, was roused to immediate action; allied with the emperor who contributed reinforcements, he sent troops under Marignano to march upon Siena and lay siege to it. By the desire of Strozzi, the King of France also despatched his brave Gascon Marshal, Blaise de Monluc, to be governor of the city.

The details of this struggle together with the long and terrible siege, hardly equaled for horror and cruelty in all history, belong also to the annals of Siena, but upon Monluc, who at the fall of the unhappy city led that remnant of the people who refused to accept the hated Spanish domination out and away to Montalcino, we may dwell for a while. When commanded by his sovereign to prepare for the defence of Siena he writes, "The king advised me to leave behind me in Gascony a little of my native choler that I might the better accommodate myself to the Italians," and wisely and valiantly did he bear himself through that fearful year while battle and the oncoming of famine tried the souls of the defenders.

Alas! disaster came almost at the beginning; the armies of the too-confident Strozzi and the wily Marignano met at Marciano and the battle resulted in the total defeat of Strozzi, who, wounded and almost alone, escaped to the refuge of Montalcino. Terrible was the shock when

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

stricken and bleeding refugees brought the crushing news to Siena, but there was no thought of surrender; Monluc and the people were united and determined; with high hearts they prepared to resist to the end.

With indomitable spirit the great ladies of Siena, heading many fearless women, took part in the defence of the city so that Monluc protests he has no words adequately to celebrate their courage. "Never," he writes, "O women of Siena, will I cease to immortalize your name, so long as the book of Monluc lives, for, of a truth, you are worthy of eternal praise if ever women were!" And though Monluc did not undervalue himself, perhaps even he scarcely hoped that his commentaries would be read for hundreds of years, nay, even come to be called "the soldier's Bible." Later he is said to have exclaimed when fighting at Rome that he would rather defend the walls of that city with the women of Siena than with Roman soldiers. Soon supplies grew scant and those highborn ladies who were wont to dress so proudly now cared nothing for their looks; as the siege advanced they no more wore rich robes, and their faces were as piteously pale as those of the poorest, for the rich and the humble suffered alike from dire hunger while they heroically denied themselves and their children that the soldiers might have more food.

As months passed and the suffering increased, it was Monluc who cheered the people and put heart into those in authority. With the beginning of the new year some of the leaders became despondent, and one night when Monluc lay ill in his house, word was sent him from one of the Spannocchi, fervid antagonist of such proposals, that Cornelio Bentivoglio, who commanded the Italian portion of the garrison, together with the council, was considering capitulation. The fiery soldier rose from his bed; he recounts how he prepared to go to the assembly and throw

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

the weight of his presence and his urgency against surrender. He had been ill for many days and he decided that the pallor of his visage became not this occasion, so taking some red wine he dipped his hands in it and rubbing his face vigorously he gave it the tint of health. "I looked in the mirror and laughed," he says. "It seemed to me that God had given me another countenance! I felt again like a lover in Piedmont." He dressed himself carefully in a costume of gray velvet embroidered with silver and a hat of the same work with superb plumes. This he describes at great length adding that it was rich and well cut, "for at the time I had it made I was in love. I was wearing gray and white in honor of a lady to whom I paid court when I had the leisure, for in camp having much time on our hands we naturally occupied ourselves with the ladies." It was the first of January and a freezing night so that it was necessary to be well wrapped. "I was enveloped in furs and so wasted was I that all thought me near death. 'What shall we do if our Governor dies?' said the women. 'We are lost, for all our hope, after God, is in him. It is not possible that he can be cured!' and I verily believe the prayers of those good ladies helped in my recovery."

Joined by the military officers he crossed the city and arrived at the Palazzo Pubblico. "When I entered, my hat in my hand, I looked about smiling at one and another; all marveled to see me thus." He listened to their discussion, they were inclining to surrender, he opposed it with ardor and in conclusion, turning to the captains of the garrison, he exclaimed, "Gentlemen, a brave man can die but once. Let us put on courage, for where confidence and valor are shown by the chief the army is inspired with them also. Let us then die sword in hand, aiding these poor Sienese to defend their liberty, and let each one of us answer for his own soldiers. At once every

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

one raised his hand aloft and cried out each in his own language, 'Yes, yes, we swear to!' Then the captain of the people and all the council rose up and thanked me and turned to the captains and thanked them also."

So for another four months they painfully held out, but alas! in the end there was but the choice of yielding, or dying by famine. Supplies were consumed, the bodies of dogs, cats, and even rats had their market value as long as they lasted, and when hardly a mouthful remained within the walls the Sienese perforce made terms with their enemies. Spannocchi still fought against this: "Rather would I," he cried out passionately, "burn down our city, yes, the very churches, and let the enemy come in to find their triumph had brought them only a heap of stones and ashes."

The terms of capitulation were honorable and included consent that all those who chose to leave the city when it was given up should not be prevented, also that the soldiers of the garrison were to march out with all honor, and so it was that on the day the conquerors were to enter by the Camollia gate there gathered in the piazza those who were determined to leave Siena and preserve their independence by going to Montalcino. Among these were "many of the most glorious and illustrious of the Sienese" as well as those of lesser note, to the number of several hundred. Monluc gives a touching account of this hour. "I was filled with pity," he writes, "both for those who went forth and for those who stayed behind. Never in all my life have I beheld a departure so heart-rending. Even our soldiers, who themselves had endured so much, mourned that they had not the power to save the freedom of this company. As for myself, I could not keep back my tears at sight of the suffering of a people so impassioned in defending their liberty."

Before they departed Marignano addressed them and



A Farm House near Montalcino.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

promised indulgence and consideration if they would remain, but no one faltered in his resolution against it. The soldiers began to form for the vanguard; they, too, had suffered, "their very clothes were pawned and they were without money to retrieve them. The Gascons were wasted with starvation." Cornelio Bentivoglio, commander of the Italian troops, led them, lance in hand, preceded by a page carrying his white-plumed helmet. Between files of the imperial troops who lined the streets, the French and Italian soldiers marched forth, carrying the seal of the city, with drums beating and colors flying; Spannocchi rode beside Monluc, who, pale, lined, his skin parched with fever, yet held his head high and wore his richest costume. There followed the sorrowing but steadfast little company of citizens, ruined in all but faith and courage. They passed southward out of the Porta Romana and weak and famished as they were, began their journey toward Montalcino.

Monluc describes how on this occasion he resolutely maintained a cheerful bearing that he might put heart into the company, and indeed these exiles had sore need of support and encouragement. Monluc had begged the victors that in pity for the old women and small children a certain number of mules might be lent to transport them, but for the most part the travelers walked, bearing in their hands the few objects they were able to carry. "As for our baggage," says Monluc, "it was so little that it counted for nothing." Once beyond the walls of the city they looked upon a ravaged wilderness, the verdant slopes, the pleasant farms and houses were gone, the bare ground lay stripped of every green blade. Ploughs rusted in the abandoned furrows and the trees bore dreadful fruit, the decaying bodies of those suspended from their branches. This last betokened the penalty for loyalty that had been exacted by the besiegers. Sieneſe farmers who attempted

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

to carry food to their starving compatriots within the walls were, if captured, promptly hanged on the nearest tree. Scant was the supply of food the wayfarers had been able to bring with them, and enfeebled as they were by long suffering, no less than fifty died by the wayside on this first day. In their extremity, Monluc says, "Of the horses I had I caused one to be killed for food. He was worth two hundred crowns, though to be sure he was by this time very thin. I took oil from church lamps and mixed with wild malva and nettles I had the flesh cooked and distributed to the people that every one should have a share."

So they slowly and painfully progressed, hardly able to walk and taking many days to the few miles between Siena and Montalcino. At Buonconvento the escort left them and Monluc and Strozzi met. "We embraced, neither of us being able to speak a word, and I know not which of us two was the more stricken of heart at the remembrance of what was past." Almost fainting, the Sieneſe toiled up the steep road to their refuge. "And," says Monluc, "at the last, gaunt, famished, and white as the dead, we arrived at Montalcino." There they were welcomed and comforted and there undismayed they looked forward to a future full of difficulty and privation but lighted by the liberty they had so suffered for. As for Monluc, on the following day the gallant gentleman wrote his report to his sovereign and with simple humility he concluded the account as follows, "And now, your majesty, there remains no more for me to say excepting that I beg you most humbly to be sure that had I known how to do better I should have done it."

The Sieneſe lost no time in setting up their little republic, modeled upon that of their mother city, they planted their banner upon the walls and strengthened their fortifications. Cosimo sent messengers to command

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

their return and to threaten their most important officials that unless they appeared at Siena within three days they would be looked upon as rebels. To which these gentlemen responded with spirit that as they were occupied in exercising their offices in Montalcino which was now the real seat of the Sienese government, it did not concern them that they were considered rebels by those who had no authority over them and they thereupon had the messengers accompanied to the town gate and dismissed. The news they received from Siena was all sad. Cosimo had of course been false to the promises he had made and there was grief and deprivation among those who had chosen to remain behind, and many had been thrown into prison. Here in Montalcino "all dwelt together in incredible harmony sharing everything in common for all alike were poor." They instituted laws, they coined their own money, and busily consolidated their federation of towns. To the east there were Castiglione d'Orcia and its seven neighboring castles, added to these, Monte Amiata and portions of the Valdichiana and the Maremma remained unconquered by Florence, and this territory comprised their realm.

As long as their powerful enemies were occupied with controversy and war among themselves they were safe, and this continued for a time, but the dream of independence without power, of a separate state adjoining that of Cosimo dei Medici was not to continue. With varying fortune they struggled to hold their territory together, but after something over a year, being sorely pressed, they wrote begging that Henry II would again send Monluc to their aid, and, with his consent, Monluc returned to them forthwith. He found Montalcino almost in a state of siege and soon relieved it after which he spent the autumn of 1556 in strengthening the youthful republic as far as was possible and with each small success in

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

his campaigning he "greatly contented the minds of the people." But the fate of Tuscany and so of little Montalcino was being decided upon a larger stage. Hardly had the siege of Montalcino terminated when Charles V, old and depleted in strength, began to relax his hold upon his great possessions and they passed into the hands of his son Philip II who, beset by wars and owing great sums of money to Cosimo dei Medici, was obliged to make terms with him, and, early in 1557, reluctantly handed over to him all his rights in Siena and her *contado*.

Meantime, the wise Monluc, while defending Montalcino to the best of his ability, was careful to anger the Medici as little as possible, for he realized the probable end of the negotiations. When at last he heard that the bargain had been struck, he resolved to allow himself one final exploit—one last victory if possible over the enemies of Montalcino and of France. This adventure was to be the retaking of Pienza, and for this there was ample provocation. He had left it as well guarded as he could, but hearing that Don Alvaro de Sandé was on the way to attack it he sent a company to intercept his advance. This company failed of its purpose so that Don Alvaro, having established himself in the town, remained there for three days and then left a garrison behind to hold the place and guard those of Monluc's men that he had taken, whom to the number of sixty he had imprisoned in the palazzo. He had then despatched messengers offering an exchange of prisoners (for Monluc was holding certain of the Spanish, earlier captured), and had scornfully added, "It shall never be said I gave up more than one French soldier without getting three Spanish, and, by my beard, I will have mine and they shall not get theirs." "At this," says Monluc, "I was hot with anger for I knew how he was starving my men while his were being well treated by me, and in this temper I resolved to have

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Pienza.” He then describes how he made his plans and assembled his men. Being familiar with the place he ordained that there should be three assaulting parties at three given points, and that all should be on the spot and prepared to attack two hours before daylight; he himself with his detachment was to break through the wall at a spot where he knew it to be weak.

On the night agreed upon he approached Pienza with the greatest caution and waited at some distance from it till he should have a signal from the other parties. A full hour passed without his receiving any and seeing that daylight was near to break he sent two men forward to steal within twenty paces of the bastion and reconnoitre. There was no more sound from the town than as though it were empty, only a little dog barked. “But,” says Monluc, “afterward I heard they knew I was there yet they waited thus and kept silence. I decided to delay no longer, but since I was on the spot, to try my fortune. We took up our ladders and marched straight to the bastion, and as soon as we reached it we received a great discharge of arrows, but not for that did we fall back but put up our ladders against the wall. I had given orders that the commissary, the pay-master, and such (for these people always have money) should be mounted on good horses and have a great display of arms, as is always my custom, so as to make a show and deceive the enemy. To M. Mallassise I had given a Turkish horse that if I had to-day I would not take five hundred crowns for. He made me an ill return for this politeness for afterward he got me into bad grace with the Duke of Guise. However, God give me patience, I had a clear conscience. But now to return to my mounted commissary, pay-master, and the rest. To be sure, they were better fitted to terrify than to do any real harm, but they served to make the people inside fly from one place to another, and I ordered them

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

to gallop rapidly round and round outside the walls to divert the attention of the enemy.

"We tried again with might and main to mount the walls but three times were we driven back and many of our ladders broken. I must tell here of our second attacking party." [This group had the unpleasant task of crawling under the first of two low walls by way of a sewer opening.] "Captain Faustin and all of his twenty men thus entered, creeping through one after another, but when they put up their ladder against the second wall so many sprang upon it at once that they broke it in pieces. How often do plans fail through such inconsiderate ardors! They tried to mend it but could not and were forced to creep out again through the same opening. The captain came to tell me of his ill fortune and at the same time there was bad news from the third attacking party, and now the sun was coming up and all of us repulsed. I was near desperate, I sprang from my horse and called my captains round me, and I vehemently addressed them, crying out, 'I am here to take this town or burst! Follow me and I will show you the road to honor!' Then I rushed forward, my sword in my hand. My twelve Swiss guards followed me and so then did all the rest; the enemy showered us with stones and some of my men were sore wounded and two of them killed.

"My Swiss now did good work against the wall with their halberds. I had my sword in my left hand and my dagger in my right, and with this I hacked and tore at the wall till soon we had made a gap, then I thrust in both arms and the wall being but the thickness of one brick and without mortar, all that portion above the ladder came falling and covering me so that my Captain of the Guard had need to drag me out from under it. The others fell to afresh with their halberds and soon a breach was made through which a man could pass. I ordered the first one

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

of my Swiss to discharge his arquebus through the hole and as he did so I gave him a push which made him take a leap he did not expect. Thus did I with those that came after, crying out, 'Jump! and I will follow you,' and so I kept on till at last I sprang down myself and began to shout 'Forward! Forward! We are within!' Many followed me and now I saw some of my own men who had entered at another place and this gave me great joy."

Monluc's men then rushed through the streets to the palazzo where their own imprisoned soldiers were held, bound together two by two. They shouted loudly and when the prisoners heard it hope made them strong, and helping each other they burst their bonds apart and in fury fell upon their Spanish guards and with stones and with their own arms killed many of them. Then the fighting waged hotter and more desperate as, ringed about by the high walls of that tiny town, they crowded and struggled. Everywhere was dreadful confusion, cries, shrieks, and curses filled the air, and there was, alas! much wanton slaughter till, at last, there came an end and Monluc's men were victorious. "And thus," he says, "was the town of Pienza taken, on the night of Saint Peter, the which made so great a noise throughout Italy, and if God had only permitted that those men sent against us that morning from Montepulciano had started an hour earlier, we could easily have overcome them and cut them to pieces."

On the day following Monluc departed from Pienza, leaving a sufficient force to protect it. "At noon I mounted my horse to return to Montalcino. The officers brought upward of a hundred work horses and some mules they had captured, praying me to take what I desired, and one of my captains begged me to accept a Neapolitan charger, the best and handsomest horse in

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Italy. Of all those offered me I accepted only this one. Afterward M. de Guise asked me for it and I gave it to him.

"At Montalcino I made my entry with but half of the three companies I had taken away with me. Behind these I caused the prisoners of rank to march, together with a few common soldiers we had taken, and after the prisoners I myself came and all my captains with their flags waving, and then the gentlemen of my suite carrying the standards of Pienza we had won. Believe me, not a man or woman in the town remained indoors, for all came out into the streets to see me enter."

It was thus that on the thirtieth day of June Monluc solemnly planted the standards of Pienza in the little piazza of Montalcino as a memorial, and it is noted that the same day seven gold crowns were paid to each of the worthy drummers and fifers. Perhaps the people comforted themselves a little with the recollection of this triumph during the oncoming of that sad time when they knew there was no more hope of their continuance as a separate government. In a few months France recalled her soldiers and defenceless as they were there was nothing for them but to submit to Cosimo. The shadowy little commonwealth had existed but for four years, then there came the day when their beloved flag was pulled down, a scene in the Communal Palace when the last mould of their coin was broken, and with tears their magistrate signed the transfer of his authority and gave up the keys of the city. The freedom they had cherished and bled for was buried. Cosimo dismantled the fortress and fastened his bulky coat of arms over the gateway of the castle where it still hangs. But the memory of its gallantry and glory will live, its unconquerable spirit of independence, its aspiration for liberty.



SPEDALETTO

CHAPTER VIII

THE VAL D'ORCIA—RADICOFANI—THE LEGEND OF RE GIANNINO



THE valley of the River Orcia—which contained Castiglione d'Orcia and its seven neighboring castles, as well as many other fortified places—was the most important part of the little republic of Montalcino, and the first to declare allegiance to her. The heights of Montepulciano lie to the north of it and those of Montalcino to the west, to the east rises the mountain ridge of Cetona where the river has its source, and to the south is the peak of Radicofani together with the cone of Monte Amiata which nobly overlooks it all. But when we speak of the valley of the Orcia the region presents itself to the memory as less a valley than a network of hills and vales, a continuous series of

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



CASTIGLIONE D'ORCIA

little watersheds, contributing to the river as it makes its way toward the Ombrone, past wood and height and fertile farm land as well as wastes of desert-like *creta*. Once it was dotted with feudal strongholds, homes of the Ghibelline barons whose fierce independence held out till, during the thirteenth century, it was gradually broken by the Guelf spirit of the towns that by force or by guile overcame it. Many were the castles dismantled or destroyed at that time, but a few still exist to tell the story of the past.

Eleven miles to the east of Montalcino, high above the River Orcia where it makes its way through the deep gorge it has cut in a spur of Monte Amiata, stand the remains of three of these castles. On the right bank is the small picturesque fortress of Ripa d'Orcia, on the left, Rôcca d'Orcia (Rôcca Tintinnano as it was earlier called), and half a mile from it the village of Castiglione d'Orcia with a castle of its own. Owners of these castles were the Aldobrandeschi, most powerful of all the feudal lords of this



Rocca d'Orcia.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

region, and longest to hold out against the growing power of Siena. They possessed nearly all of southern Tuscany, a wild country at that time, difficult of access and sparsely inhabited; and robber barons as they were, they found themselves admirably placed in their eyries above the Orcia to command the great Via Francigena at this point and lawlessly exact what they pleased from those who traveled between Siena and Rome. Looking out over this part of Tuscany from the parapet of Castiglione, it is difficult to realize that much of it was virtually uninhabitable in the thirteenth century. Unbroken woods covered the slopes, while lakes and pools bristling with canebrakes obstructed the valleys between. From the summits above frowned the castles and against them nestled the villages, each with its bit of cultivation about it. Below lay the highroad, and it is easy to see how well it could be controlled by feudal tyrants like the Aldobrandeschi.

When the oppression they exercised became unendurable Siena marched out against Castiglione and took it, but it was not a secure possession and long remained insubordinate. After the battle of Montaperti it harbored the Sienese rebels, and some years later held out against a siege of forty days by the Guelfic League. In 1300 there was prolonged war again between Siena and the Aldobrandeschi, and the former having finally attacked and reduced Castiglione, the haughty counts decided to come to terms with the captors, and Siena obtained final possession of it when they agreed to make the place over to her for three thousand gold florins. Portions of the castle remain to-day and near by the houses of the village are clustered about two small churches, San Stefano and Santa Maria Maddalena, which have had the good fortune to retain their valuable old pictures, works of Lippo Memmi, Vecchietta, Lorenzetti, and Bartolo di Fredi.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

It is but a stone's throw from Castiglione across to the bold tower of Rôcca d'Orcia, a still more spectacular ruin, spiked on the apex of a sharp little peak that rises from the ridge at this point. Both before and after the Counts of Tintinnano, feudatories of the Aldobrandeschi, ruled there the castle had a tempestuous history, but when the latter family was obliged to give up Castiglione the Rôcca Tintinnano perforce went with it, and thereafter the two were united. In the middle of the fourteenth century they were in the hands of the Salimbeni, a family whose power had so grown as to threaten the sovereignty of Siena itself. A contest began which lasted for many years, only ending in 1418 when Rôcca d'Orcia was wrested from the Salimbeni by treason. Malavolti tells the sorry story of the corruption of the garrison of Rôcca d'Orcia by Siena, the betrayal of Cocco Salimbeni and how he had barely time to take refuge in the tower with his wife and a handful of followers, where they shut themselves up and defended themselves while their other strongholds in the neighborhood were taken or surrendered. At last they were forced to make terms, they came forth, "and Cocco Salimbeni with his wife and family together with much household goods and a good bit of money went away to Montepulciano and then to Florence, despoiled of all his castles."

This was the last siege these castles were destined to suffer until Cosimo came, and the Orcia Valley was terribly fought over during all the unhappy time occupied in subduing the Sienese territory, so that to this day it shows the scars of those cruel years. As the armies ranged back and forth destruction became so complete that many a remote village perished utterly and the very memory of it was blotted out. The soldiers were wont to complain bitterly that there was no more booty worth collecting, and that to secure but a single cow they must travel for



Ripa d'Orcia.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

miles. For example, Pienza was fifteen times sacked, and at last Cosimo himself realized the danger that the whole *contado* might be depopulated, so lest he should find himself in the position of the conqueror of an uninhabited territory, he actually began to bribe the remnant of the fleeing population to return. When his general, Don Garzia, sent a force to take Castiglione d'Orcia they found the town abandoned and entered it. Pecci says, "With two or three shots of their cannon having scared the castellan, they took the *rôcco*. Agostino and Girolamo Vescovo were inside, both equally mean of soul, and were made prisoners. Out of pure cowardice Agostino fell ill. . . . The flight of an arrow from Castiglione is Rôcca Tintinnano, unassailable as if cut out of the living rock. In this was one of the Piccolomini who was so frightened by the fate of the two Vescovi that he yielded almost without defending himself."

From Castiglione the road leads to another of the high castles that perch above the Orcia Valley, and follows the spine of the connecting ridge for some miles, with a great view on either side. I could see on the right hand Monte Leone resting like a cloud on the western horizon, nearer lay Campagnatico and Paganico and in front Monte Amiata. From it the mountains swept across to Radicofani and Cetona, while below, the many windings of the Orcia gleamed among its folding hills. The sunset sky was covered with a seamless curtain of pale gold. A pure, cool wind blew across the grassy comb of the ridge as it stretched still and lonely before me, and thus lifted into an ampler air with vague distances below, one felt detached from earth as though moving through space with the ease of certain large birds, the slow motion of whose great wings propels them steadily but without haste.

After a time there came in sight a village of humble

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

houses clinging to the base of a great pyramid of rock topped by a castle the very type of the feudal stronghold that Campiglia d'Orcia was. The Visconti who were the lords of it appear to have been among the most merciless tyrants of their kind, so that when, for their broken oaths to her, Siena came in 1234 and stormed their fortress, so furious was the struggle that the Visconti men were flung over the battlements to the rocks below just as they themselves had been wont to fling large stones down upon their enemies, never minding if some of them fell upon the heads of the miserable villagers in the streets below. There had long been enmity between this place and Siena, so that the Sienese regarded the triumph as a glorious one and ordered the evil place destroyed, and carried away many of the women as prisoners to Siena. So great was the rejoicing when they arrived at home victorious that it overflowed in generosity to the unhappy ladies they had brought in their train, and the story is thus delightfully ended by an old Sienese chronicler:

"The said Campiglia was sacked, destroyed, and burned, because the defenders thereof refused to surrender, and they came all of them to a bad end, save only the women, who were sent to Siena; and no injury was done to them. And many of them were widows, in that their husbands had been slain in the battle . . . so to those women, such of their husbands as had been made prisoners, were for pity's sake restored, because they had no means wherewith to pay a ransom. . . . And they were all led, bound with a rope, into our Duomo; and there, for the love of the Virgin Mary, who had given us so great a victory, they were released before the high altar."

From Campiglia one drops to the highway and then by various turnings and lesser ascents and descents, approaches the isolated peak of Radicofani, for however one

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

steers one's course over the sea of plains, valleys, and hills beneath, it is always in sight, looking out upon all sides like the beacon that it is.

On the drive toward it, a bit off from the highway, stands that beautiful castle of the plain, Spedaletto. Judging by its thick walls, its towers, its command of the country from every angle, it might well have defended itself in many an assault or held out against more than rigorous siege, yet it has done none of these things, for its history is of the most pacific. It belonged to the hospital of La Scala in Siena, housing immense stores of grain, oil, and wine that belonged to that rich institution, as well as serving as a refuge for the sick and the destitute of the neighborhood. It still answers to farm uses and is less ruinous than the other castles of the region.

The sterile mountain tapers to a cliff-bound summit, admirable pedestal for its fortress with lodgment for the village below. The Longobards fortified Radicofani, probably in the eighth century, and those barbarians must have rejoiced as they looked up at this eyrie, seeing how naturally prepared it was against attack. By the tenth century it was in the possession of the Monastery of San Salvatore, and in 1143 the abbot was confirmed in his rights by Pope Celestine II, who declared that it should be under the special protection of the Holy See, and that it should pay an annual tribute.

The following year, the Sieneſe, who considered they had rights in a portion of Radicofani, decided to make their possession complete through taking the town by force; and in failing to do so did not endear themselves to the inhabitants by burning all that was destructible in the neighborhood of the place as they withdrew. Indeed, the hatred they brought upon themselves by their conduct in this retreat was a factor in their defeat when, soon after, they made a second attempt. The abbot now ceded the

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

half of Radicofani to the Pope, so adding a third claimant which complicated ownership still further, while in these centuries there was, of course, always the imperial authority to consider also. In 1154 Pope Adrian IV, who liked to have strong fortresses on the road between the seat of the Church and Ghibelline Siena, began to strengthen the walls of the town, adding fortified towers; and while this was going forward it became known that Frederic Barbarossa with a great army was on the way to Rome determined to have himself crowned emperor there. The Pope being a wise man was disinclined to trust altogether to what might come of the negotiations which he looked forward to (and that ended, as we know, in such discord), so he sent messengers to the Abbot of San Salvatore, and, the two agreeing, the construction of the defences was finished in great haste. Indeed, whatever protection walls and towers might afford, this castello certainly had need of, for standing as it did upon the boundary of the papal territory it was sure of being often the centre of conflict. On this occasion, however, though the fortifications stood ready, matters between the Pope and the emperor still lay in the balance, and Frederic Barbarossa, with his shining host, passed along the valley below and no one mounted to the gate of Radicofani.

As time went on the Abbot of San Salvatore and his monks, dwelling on the opposite mountainside where they had the stronghold of Radicofani always in sight across the valley, felt the need of taking all possible means for making themselves secure in their hold upon it, and in 1210 applied to the Emperor, Otto IV, for his favor and support, which was promptly granted; not to the pleasure of Rome or Siena, nor to the tranquillity of Radicofani herself, who suffered all through this century from the struggles of rival claimants. The petty encroachments of Siena and the ensuing quarrels created such resentment



Campiglia d'Orcia.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

that after the great Ghibelline victory of Montaperti in 1260 many noble Guelfs of Siena took refuge in Radicofani, who adopted their cause against their native city.

Having arrived there, these guests, we are told, "lived quietly, taking only what they needed from the people," and we are tempted to speculate upon what these aristocratic families considered they "needed" and whether it was hard upon that humble part of the population that tilled the soil and produced with tireless labor the food to supply not only its own people in war and in peace, but, on occasion, the armies of the enemy, the captains of adventure, and the brigands with their followers.

For more than one reason Siena disapproved of the absence of that group of her important citizens who had established themselves in Radicofani, and so sent a group of eloquent orators to reason with them. These gentlemen harangued them at great length, taking the highest patriotic grounds as argument for their submission and return. But it was of no avail; the nobles refused; they would remain where they were. Meantime, the oppressed townspeople made energetic complaint to Siena; what they suffered from these unwelcome guests was not to be borne, and Siena, resorting to force, sent an army against her rebellious sons.

About eight miles to the north of Radicofani lies the little circular valley where stands Abbadia Spineta; it is so small—a mere cup in the hills—that one can hardly imagine it contained room for a bloody battle, but it was here that the conflict took place in which Siena dealt punishment to her defiant sons, and a pitiful sight it was to see knights from the noblest houses in Siena lying stained with blood upon the ground, brought to death by the hands of those of their own city; and of such as were left alive many were taken to Siena as prisoners and made to pay a heavy ransom for their liberty. In order

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

that the town should not again afford a refuge to her disaffected citizens, Siena thought it prudent to dismantle the walls and this was therefore done, though it does not seem to have been accomplished so thoroughly as to prevent its being taken and held a few years later by the famous outlaw, Ghino di Tacco, whose story Boccaccio relates in the Decameron. When, after two or three years, he had been expelled, the disputes as to ownership continued and, in 1409, Ladislao, King of Naples, being at war with the Sieneese, stormed and sacked it, and then, probably because it was too costly to keep, tossed it back for a price to Siena, in a ruined condition.

It is not to be wondered at that, after this, the people of Radicofani decided to give themselves formally to Siena. The transfer being consented to by the Pope, in return for this voluntary submission Siena granted them a long list of privileges and immunities, these being deserved, it was allowed, by reason of the succession of injuries and sufferings they had endured during the many previous years. On their side the people agreed that each year in August they would send to the Cathedral of Siena a *palio* of scarlet of the value of twenty-five florins, and this with ceremony, in the charge of four messengers, for Siena loved brave festivities. So having cast in her lot with Siena, Radicofani remained faithful and received a measure of protection thereby, and when Pope Pius II, loving Siena as he did, released at her solicitation the last claims which the Papal States might advance, the gracious act was commemorated in the Palazzo Comunale, where the Pope, enthroned in the midst of his cardinals, is represented as granting this concession to the kneeling podestà of Siena.

The great *fortezza* of Radicofani was now ordered built with the help of Lombard masons, and the people, watching the laying of its mighty stones, were comforted by the



Spedaletto.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

prospect of a greater security than they had yet enjoyed, little dreaming that a new destructive agency was even then coming into being before which in another century it would inevitably fall. About this time, too, it was decided to make a change in the highroad which then lay far down the mountain, following the low ground near the River Paglia. The gorge of this river often afforded shelter for outlaws and brigands, besides which it was with difficulty controlled when the mercenary companies, which then infested Tuscany, came that way. So a portion of the road was destroyed and a new one made and brought up under the walls of the town. By this the people of Radicofani gained another advantage for, whereas before many strangers and merchants had passed by without coming up to the town, and thus their patronage was lost, they now frequented it and passed the night there to the profit of the inhabitants.

When in the course of the following century Siena fell and the little republic of Montalcino was set up, Radicofani became a part of its territory and transferred a warm allegiance to the new government, but Cosimo, whose eye was upon it as a point too commanding to be allowed outside his authority, having intercepted letters from which he gained the information that the place was ill supplied with food and ammunition, sent an expedition to take it under the command of the famous *condottiere*, Chiappino Vitelli. To the surprise of this general, Radicofani made a most spirited and brilliant resistance, a number of women taking part in the defence. A manuscript of the century describes it thus:

“Nor would I keep silence concerning the intrepidity of the governor’s wife, Monna Francesca, who, with her cousin Emilia, led more than two hundred women, who, fighting with arms and with stones, conducted themselves with such manliness and with such greatness of

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

heart that the soldiers were inspired thereby to acts of the utmost bravery."

At last the forces of the assailants were assembled for a general attack, they attempted to mount the walls with scaling ladders so that those within were obliged to strain every nerve; but the assault was repulsed and the enemy amazed and piqued beyond measure was making vigorous preparations for another battle when Vitelli was ordered by Cosimo to desist, as complications had arisen which caused an abandonment of the siege for the time. Great was the relief of the people of Radicofani, but great also were their losses. Brave leaders were slain; their fallen soldiers encumbered the ground inside the walls, and piteous it was that among them lay, with pallid faces and blood-stained garments, certain of those gentle ladies who had made themselves warriors for the love of their city and led the women of Radicofani in that gallant defence. With rejoicing for victory and tears for the dead they were buried, and surely Radicofani has never ceased to remember and to honor them.

The independence so ardently fought for lasted a little longer, but when after the victory of Château Cambrésis, Montalcino, last refuge of the Wolf of Siena, was forced to submit to the Medici, Radicofani, perforce, did the same.

One day in early November I sat in the window of the Albergo Dante looking out upon the crooked little piazza of Radicofani with its rock pavement and its steep descent from the fortress above. It had an aspect of severity, borne out by the appearance of its ancient Palazzo Pretorio, which is now a prison and is stripped of all its exterior beauty excepting the coats of arms on its front. There is a fortunate law which prevents the removal of these, and even on private palaces they must not be displaced for one of a new owner. Presently I heard footsteps and voices and then there appeared a number of

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

women, walking two by two down from the little graveyard higher up the mountain. They were tall, erect, and dark, with fine carriage, fit daughters of those unconquerable women who defied the army of Cosimo dei Medici centuries ago, and I hoped those dauntless ancestors had not been forgotten in their orisons, for it was All Souls' Day and I knew they had come from putting up petitions in the little chapel. One of them especially attracted my attention, so spirited and handsome was she, and there was something martial in the way she carried her head; the hat she wore was bound about with an orange-colored scarf and bore two peacock feathers upright. When they had passed on and the piazza was empty again I went out to visit the two della Robbias that Radicofani possesses. In San Pietro, the parish church, is a lovely white statue of Santa Caterina untouched by color, and in Santa Agata an altarpiece, one of the most beautiful of all the della Robbias. A short climb then took me to the shattered fortress where there are but a few torn fragments of wall left standing; the final ruin of the structure was not due to war but to an explosion which took place when it was used as a powder magazine.

Scattered over the ground hereabout lie rough masses of reddish lava, porous on the outside but singularly hard within. They occasioned much speculation in an earlier age and one author writes of them:

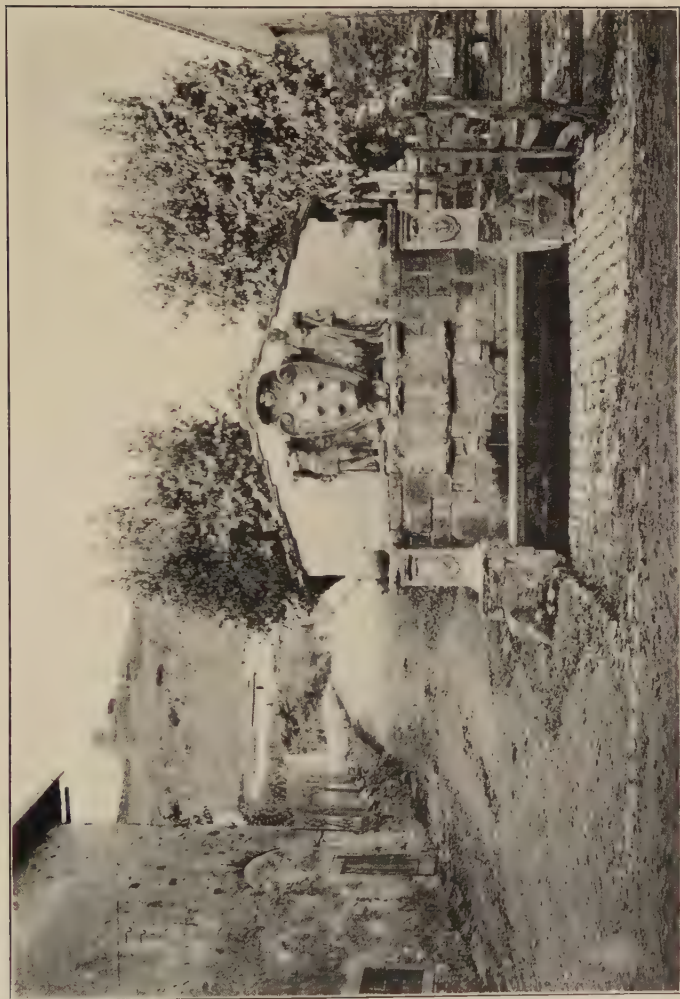
"It is said these strange stones were first one great rock which was rent apart at the death of Christ as the Bible describes such rocks to have been, but there are not wanting those who declare they were thrown down by Jove to aid his son Hercules in his battles with the Ligurians, for indeed this place was called by the Romans Campus Herculeus. But the other explanation is much more probable."

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

The view from this height is superb and in the clear autumn sunshine it was pleasant to linger there and look out over the incomparable prospect of hill, valley, and mountain, and as my eye wandered over so much of Tuscany spread out below me, I remembered that once Re Giannino might have seen it from the very spot I sat on, for his name is connected with Radicofani. I wondered if as he gazed on the fair land he was leaving to try his hazardous fortune elsewhere, he felt a pang to think his eyes might never rest upon it again. Perhaps not, the vision before him was too dazzling. Over upon the clouds hovering above the western horizon he saw painted the kingdom and the power and the glory he thought awaited him and he saw no tragedy lying between. The high romance of his story stirred the imagination of the Middle Ages and now it has become a fairy tale told to children. Thus it runs:

When, in 1316, Louis X of France died at the age of twenty-six, leaving a young wife and a little daughter Jeanne, his brother Philip became regent, as the queen was expecting another child, and until it could be known whether she would bear a son the succession could not be established.

Now Philip had an ambitious mother-in-law, the Countess of Bourgogne, a woman greedy of power, who ardently desired that the looked-for child might be a daughter, for in that case her son-in-law would become king and she herself might contrive to have a share in the government. Great was her disappointment, therefore, when five months later the queen gave birth to a boy. According to the custom of the time, the infant was given into the care of those barons of the realm highest in rank, one of whose duties it was to choose as nurse to the royal child the person best fitted for that office. Hearing that a young Parisian of noble family had just borne a



Radicofani. A Fountain in the Town.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

child, and finding her position and circumstances suitable they entrusted the little prince to her.

It was a sorrowful foster-mother who accepted this charge, for Maria de Charti was mourning for her young husband from whom she had been forcibly separated. This husband was a Sienese youth of the Tolomei family, by name Guccio di Baglione, who had come to Paris to look after the mercantile affairs of his uncle, and the brothers of Maria becoming friendly to him he spent much time at their *palazzo*, and frequently went hunting with them. It was not long before he fell in love with the beautiful daughter of the house, and without confiding in her parents or brothers they were secretly married, and thus lived until Maria's condition made it necessary for them to confess. A storm followed, neither parents nor brothers would tolerate an alliance so far beneath the rank of their family, for although Guccio belonged to one of the noble lines of Siena he had disqualified himself by being concerned with trade. His wife was shut up in a convent and he himself was driven from the house. His relatives being alarmed, sent for him lest, remaining in France, an attempt might be made upon his life. In the very month in which the young queen gave birth to her son one was born also to Maria, and thus when she had been viewed and approved by the French barons, her brothers, seeing future possibilities of advantage to themselves through the arrangement, had prevailed upon her to accept the care of the young king.

It was now plain to the Countess of Bourgoigne that immediate measures must be taken to destroy the infant who stood in the way of her advancement and she had already taken the precaution to have it noised about as soon as the child was born that he was so feeble and sickly it was impossible he should live more than a few days. This was a blow to the people and they clamored to see

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

with their own eyes whether there was no hope for the young heir. Such was their insistence that the barons were constrained to consent though greatly dreading harm to the child, for, being without proof against the countess, they could not make the danger known. Conferring among themselves as to what protection was possible, they decided to expose the child of Maria in the place of the young king, and so contrived that the substitution was made without suspicion on the part of the mother. Poor Maria, isolated in a convent and for the time without knowledge of affairs outside, was persuaded to be separated from her baby for a few hours by earnest assurances that it involved no possible danger. Great was the rejoicing of the populace when they were allowed to view the child and saw that he was of a fine healthy appearance; but carefully guarded as he was during that day, the wicked countess managed to have access to him for a moment and that very night he died. "Whether," says Gigli, "she constricted his head or pierced him with a needle or gave him poison is not known."

The rejoicings of the people were turned to sorrow, but the barons, while expressing their regret to the mother, privately congratulated one another that their charge was safe and the Lady Maria's profound grief was explained as due to the horror she felt at the death of her young sovereign. Inconsolable at the loss of her own baby as she was, poor Maria still tenderly cared for her foster-child, and lived only in the hope that her husband would find some way to reach her and to carry her with him to his own country. In fact Guccio, yearning to see his wife and child, did return, but the family of Maria kept so close a guard upon her that he could by no possible means communicate with her, even to inform her of his proximity, and at last was obliged to retire unsuccessful. Meantime the barons found themselves in an unhappy predicament;

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Philip had had himself proclaimed king, putting aside his niece Jeanne, and they dared not at once disclose the success of their plot and the existence of the rightful heir, so they postponed it, hoping for some turn of affairs that would bring a favorable moment, but the years went by and Philip's strength only increased and the opportunity never came. During this time Maria's only comfort lay in cherishing the young king as her own, and hoping against hope that she might be united to her husband.

When the boy had reached the age of ten years, Guccio, who had now given up all hope of recovering his wife, determined to get possession of his son, and to that end began to negotiate with the brothers of Maria, who were quite ready to treat with him on that ground, as they welcomed the idea of ridding the family of a child who, they considered, was the evidence of a blot on the purity of their line. They therefore assisted the father, the child was abducted, and father and son disappeared to be seen in Paris no more, "and there were no complaints from any one other than the supposed mother," remarks the teller of the story, "for those barons who knew of the secret were by this time dead, having told only the Bishop of Paris who, for the like reason, kept silence." The unhappy Lady Maria now fades out of the story, but in dying she had revealed the sad secret to her confessor, given him documents and proofs, and adjured him to search for the child and give him knowledge of his royal birth. As for the little boy who had been carried home by the unsuspecting Guccio as his own son, he was called Giannino and grew to a sober manhood as a worthy member of the Tolomei family, and an honored citizen of Siena.

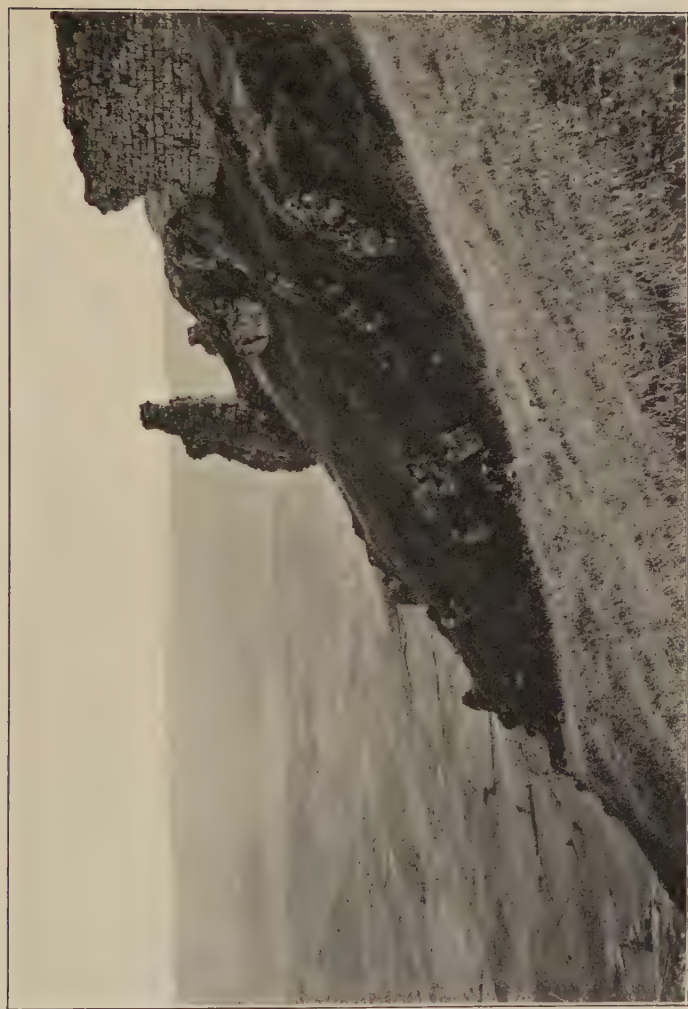
During these years his strange history was being repeated and so coming to the knowledge of a greater and greater number of people, for Maria's confessor though taking no steps to discover Giannino had confided it to a

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

number of his clerical friends, who carried the tale to Rome where they spread it still farther. By the time Giannino was nearly thirty years of age the confessor, grown old and feeling his hour was near, began to have a troubled conscience in that he had been false to the confidence placed in him, so he gave the documents to his friend, Fra Antonio, begging him to find young Tolomei, give him the papers, and aid him as far as possible. Fra Antonio set out upon his journey but arrived at Porto Venere very ill and, being unable to proceed farther, he cast about in his mind as to whom he might appeal to, and decided to send the proofs to Cola di Rienzo and beg him to undertake the affair.

Cola, "great of heart," accepted the obligation for he had already heard Giannino's story, and promptly moved in the matter. He soon identified Giannino and wrote to Siena, telling him to disguise himself and come at once to Rome. Giannino obeyed and was privately admitted to the presence of the great man, who gave him the documents that had come into his possession, assured the amazed youth of his protection, and promised to treat with the Pope and the kings of Christendom in his behalf ordering him meantime to go home and remain discreet and silent till he should himself direct him what step next to take.

The bewildered Re Giannino returned to Siena, his heart swelling, his brain whirling. The quiet past seemed a slumber and a dream, the dazzling future shone before him, his real life was about to begin, he stood upon the first step of a throne. For four days the wondrous vision lasted, on the fifth Cola di Rienzo lay dead, slain by a Roman mob. With that death the glowing future turned gray and chill before the eyes of Re Giannino, hope died in him, and when he was able to think he resolved to shut away in his own breast all that concerned the great secret,



Radicofani. Ruins of the Fortress.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

with no one would he share the knowledge, set apart from all mankind he would commune only with himself. This heroic mood lasted for a while but presently he found it irresistible not to impart the story to a few friends in strict confidence. These repeated it as confidentially to others, suddenly all Siena was conscious of it, fairly buzzed with it, and Giannino's frightened attempts to deny it were in vain. He became a person of consequence, an income was decreed him, and a title of dignity. Three of his fellow citizens offered him aid in establishing his claim, but at this point the wealthy merchants of the city stepped in and opposed any such action, it would ruin their business, it would provoke the hostility of France and endanger the very existence of the Sienese Republic. Every one now drew back, there were no more offers of assistance, but Giannino was thoroughly roused, he determined to go forth into the world alone and seek his fortune.

Leaving Siena and carrying nothing with him more substantial than good wishes, he journeyed to Venice and asked the advice of a reformed Jew by the name of Daniele. Daniele was willing to lend money on his prospects, and Giannino went first to visit the King of Hungary, brother to the queen his mother. King Ludovico acknowledged him as his nephew, and having no gold to spare, gave him letters to all the princes of Italy, and with these he traveled far and wide, finally going to Avignon to ask for recognition from the Pope. Innocent VI, who was pontiff at that time, seems to have encouraged him for at Avignon he gathered together an armed band with which to proceed to Paris and make good his claim to the throne. Every exile and malcontent in Avignon joined his standard, and fitted out with funds obtained from Daniele, he set forth at the head of his little band with high hopes, while as he marched French rebels and many of the disaffected joined him. He had a few brief successes, he felt sure of his final

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

triumph, but the rabble he led was untrustworthy; he had advanced no farther than Provence when he was betrayed, taken prisoner, and handed over to the officers of the crown, not without suspicion that the very ecclesiastical hand which had been extended to help him was a second time stretched forth to apprehend him.

This time he escaped and endeavored to call his followers together again, but he was taken, put in irons, and carried back to Naples where he was placed in the hands of the unscrupulous Queen Joanna, who had long been eager to get possession of him at any cost. She hurried him to the Castel dell' Ovo and from the time the gates of that prison closed upon him no more is told of the unfortunate Re Giannino, excepting that in a short time he died, and whether his end was hastened by his enemies or whether, broken hearted, he pined away, is not surely known.





TO SANTA FIORA

CHAPTER IX

SAN SALVATORE—PIANCASTAGNAJO—THE LEGEND OF THE LITTLE HEBREW—SANTA FIORA



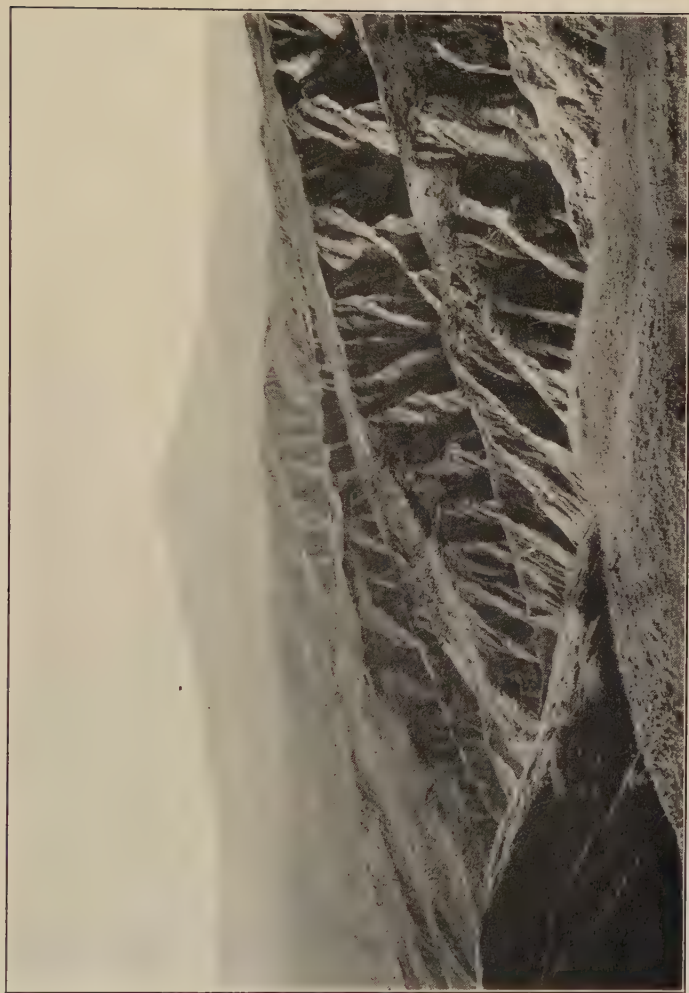
LOOKING across from Radicofani toward Abbazia San Salvatore, it is hard to detect it, peering out as it does from a covert of chestnut woods on that grandly sweeping eastern slope of Monte Amiata; but a drive of an hour between the Orcia, on the north, and the Paglia, running south to join the Tiber, brings one to its gate. The way lies by many a hill and vale, passing harsh tracts of *creta*, which alternate with farms, hedges, and groups of trees, and at last gradually climbing to those beautiful forests of chestnut and beech through which the road winds under a leafy canopy till it reaches the famous old Benedictine abbey and its dependent village. In its day it was one of the

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

most important foundations in central Italy, and when bishops and abbots were potent temporal rulers, its territory extended from Chiusi to Grosseto and the sea, and south beyond the present boundary of Tuscany. To-day it still clings there in the beauty of its forest surrounding, a gray and hoary reminder of what it once was. Not that it is a solitary ruin; on the contrary, it is still populous, but the high authority that dwelt in the abbey has departed, an authority that was even then often questioned and struggled against in the humble town beside it that longed for communal independence.

The fortunate preservation of its form and character show the distinctive features of the place still, the abbey and its village standing on opposite sides of a ravine, each walled and entered by a separate gate. It is not the most hospitable of places; ruffianly boys greeted us with yells and one or two threw stones. They were gently rebuked by their elders, but they capered away beyond reach and mocked them; evidently discipline is lax in San Salvatore. The buildings of smoked and weather-worn stone have a sombre picturesqueness and overlook narrow, sunless streets where an air of poverty clings. It is hard to say such a thing of any Tuscan town, but San Salvatore is shamefully dirty and this in the face of comparative prosperity and an abundant supply of water at frequent intervals in the streets. There are too many women idling in their grimy doorways which evidently lead to uncleanness within; the streets run with liquid mud and garbage lies rotting in heaps while foul pools obstruct even the entrance to the church. For this state of things one seeks an explanation and finds it in the history of the place.

When the power of the great abbey declined, the people suffered more than usual distress, for the local resources were few, the soil of their perpendicular fields yielded a scant return, and solely upon the chestnuts of their forests



Monte Amiata.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

they could not live; therefore a large proportion of the men were constrained to emigrate for part of the year to the Maremma to graze their flocks and work at harvesting, and from it they returned with slender gains and too often weakened by malarial infection. They were poorly nourished, their food for the most part consisting of chestnut polenta and sheep's milk cheese; and years of combined malnutrition and malaria produced an effect almost racial. In this impoverished condition they were more than once visited by a plague of typhus, and to aggravate matters there was unhappily a great amount of drunkenness; so that when, some seventeen years ago, the quicksilver mines on the upper slope of the mountain were opened and employment offered for all, a population existed physically depleted, languid, and inert, little calculated to raise its standard of living with the added ease of good wages. Moreover, the industry in itself being a poisonous one, added its depressing effect, so that there is much excuse for lack of initiative and thrift in San Salvatore.

Recently the government sent an able investigator to San Salvatore and with his valuable report there is hope that every effort will be made to overcome so far as possible the unhappy conditions existing there.

From the very gate of San Salvatore one reënters the clean, cool chestnut forest that on the right hand climbs above the road and on the left drops steeply enough to leave gaps among the masses of foliage giving beautiful views of the valley below and the distant hills. Four miles of this charming progress bring one to the little walled town of Piancastagnajo with the towers of its castle mounting finely above its gateway. Very imposing it looks still and fit to defend a far larger place; indeed, though Piancastagnajo was small, remote, and forest-encircled, it led as uneasy a life as towns of greater size, and among its claimants the old names appear and reap-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



PALAZZO BORBONE. PIANCASTAGNAJO

pear. On entering, it is seen to be cleaner than San Salvatore, yet not too clean; the inhabitants, though so near the mines, do not in general work in them and there are no evidences of important buildings—excepting perhaps that offered by one bricked-up Gothic window on the small piazza—till one comes to the other end of the town where stands the great Palazzo Borbone, with a noble staircase and a terrace commanding a great view of the Paglia Valley as far as the Roman campagna. It has a garden, too, all lapsed to wildness, but not wildness of the kind that adds charm rather than takes it away, for it is somewhat hard and bare, the skeleton of a once beautiful thing. All is silent there now and the lovely ladies and gallant cavaliers that once made the halls and shrubberies gay with color and laughter are gone, and the huge Roman palace looks alien to anything else in the village or indeed to the whole countryside, for building here belongs to the Middle Ages and has naught to do with anything so modern as a seventeenth-century palazzo.

With the nobles who lorded it in places such as these

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

have departed also whatever wealth and display they flaunted; their palaces are empty or else turned into prisons or municipal buildings, and the humble people who earn their bread as tillers of the soil, shepherds, or in this locality and that of Santa Fiora, as miners, remain. Added to these there will be the priest, the doctor, perhaps a lawyer, and, sometimes, a proprietor who comes in summer with his family for their *villeggiatura*; but it is all very different from the seventeenth century as well as from the earlier time when these gray stone castles held the feudal lords who built them and who maintained their power in this region so long.

I was taken through the ground floor of the Palazzo Borbone, seeing little but impressive emptiness, and thence to the ducal stables which are really worth while as showing what luxury and completeness required three hundred years ago, and which I advise no visitor to omit visiting. And for the rest, what interested me most about Piancastagnajo was that it was the scene of a strange dramatic incident which took place there in the sixteenth century; that is, in the one preceding that in which Giovan Battista Borbone built his sumptuous palazzo and introduced a new element into the life of the place. It was recorded by one Ser Fabritio Selvi, residing in the town, and has lately been interestingly retold by Signor Barzellotti in his life of David Lazaretti of Arcidosso, and forms a concrete example of a type of superstition and intolerant religious fervor which belonged to that age.

The central point of a village community such as that of Piancastagnajo was of course the church, and one day while mass was being celebrated there a sudden and startling interruption took place. A little Jewish girl of six followed by a crowd of boys and girls about her own age entered the church, and, unabashed, pressed up to the very steps of the altar. The officiating priest, astonished,

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

paused and demanded the meaning of their unseemly behavior, whereupon Ebreina—"the little Hebrew," as she came to be called—declared in a high childish treble that it was her desire to become a Christian.

A perceptible thrill ran through the congregation, but the priest desired the children to keep silence till the service should be concluded. With lessened attention it proceeded, and as soon as it was over, the *commissario*, highest authority in Piancastagnajo, was sent for and the child questioned before him. With steady persistence she held to her previous announcement, she wished to become a Christian. The village people listened to her avowal with an excitement far greater than that of the child herself, who in the midst of the amazement she had evoked remained singularly calm. In the end, the *commissario* took the child by the hand and followed by most of the population of the town, led her to the house of a responsible citizen in whose care he placed her. There she was jealously guarded and her father and mother denied access to her. In amazement and indignation, her parents and their Jewish friends demanded that she should be restored to them while her appointed guardian as steadily refused to give her up.

An immense emotional excitement now took possession of the whole population, and for a month they lived in a passion of fanatic fervor almost impossible to realize at the present day. Here was a child suspended above the pit, a soul to be saved for eternity! They implored that she might be baptised without delay, and clamored against the *commissario* for his impious procrastination. Ebreina, meantime, repudiated her parents and refused food sent her by them on fast days, returning word that she could not eat meat upon a day when it was forbidden by the Church.

A multitude of communications now traveled to Flor-



Piancastagnajo. The Fortress.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

ence, the Christians asking how to proceed with regard to the child and the Jews insisting that she must be given back. During the time that intervened before an answer could be received, the Church was filled with a beseeching multitude putting up impassioned prayers for the child whose salvation was hanging in the balance. At length a messenger arrived bringing orders from Florence, but to the horror and distress of the people, they were to the effect that Ebreina must be returned to her family. In defiance of this command, her guardian refused to release her. He was deaf to the indignant demands of her Jewish friends and he persisted even when threatened with a fine.

From this moment a daily battle was waged. Eloquent letters were again and again sent to Florence and even to Rome. Ecclesiastics and laymen took part. Church dignitaries assembled in Piancastagnajo desiring to make the cause of Ebreina their own, and profoundly examined into her spiritual state. During these proceedings the people reached a state of hysteria. Peasants patrolled the country on horseback lest the Jews should succeed in capturing Ebreina and carry her off by stealth, and one day, at a rumor that this had been accomplished, a frantic woman ran shrieking the news through the village. With one accord women and boys surged to the piazza carrying sticks, stones, and knives, and an unknown man arriving at the moment, barely escaped with his life upon denying he was a Jew, crossing himself again and again and declaring himself baptised. Toward evening the men, heated with wine, took part in the demonstration, while the wretched Jews, in danger of their lives, had taken refuge in the synagogue. Riot and disorder reached such a pitch that control could hardly be kept and the Pope's vicar, who now appeared in Piancastagnajo, admonished the turbulent congregation that the Jews must not be

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

injured. Documents continued to arrive ordering the child surrendered, while, on the other hand, the authorities hardly dared carry out such commands in the face of the fury of the people. From a distance a cardinal in high standing sent letters desiring that the child should be sent at once to him, and threatening in case of refusal to excommunicate the whole village.

An unendurable blow now fell upon the population. The clerical decision was rendered that their Ebreina must not yet be baptised, the rite could not be performed before she had reached the age of twelve years. The people groaned and rebelled, they clamored for the direct interposition of heaven—a miracle, no less. The whole countryside prayed for it, women thronged the church and spent hours upon their knees, and yearning to have the child take part in their devotions, it was permitted that she should be taken from the house of her guardian and, surrounded by a bodyguard of numerous women, conveyed to church. Here, behind a grating above the altar, she assisted at the recitation of the rosary, gazed at from below by hundreds of devoted and imploring eyes.

The chronicler here comments upon her exemplary behavior, her seemly bearing, and her devout mien, while the mind of the reader is dwelling upon the unhealthy influence of these weeks of excitement and factitious importance upon the imagination of a child, and questioning the piety and modesty attributed to her by the credulous commentator. Finally it was announced by the authorities that the little girl was to be taken by her guardian to Siena, in the charge of an escort of soldiers and thence to Florence where she would be given to the Marchese dei Medici to be educated. Anxiety and distress filled the village, their Ebreina was to be taken away, her salvation uncompleted. The people remonstrated and implored,

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

but were helpless. When the appointed day arrived, a solemn and spectacular departure was arranged. The population assembled in the piazza, all but the unhappy Jews who remained shut up in the synagogue or barricaded in their dwellings, ignored by the authorities and suppressed by their townsmen. Officers of justice from beyond the town had been sent for, and were stationed among the crowd as a tacit check upon any attempt at abduction. The people knelt and with broken voices chanted the litany, the women sobbed and ejaculated, the men muttered threateningly. At last the little procession started, seven horsemen protecting Ebreina and her guardian. They moved slowly down the street of the village and passing out through the great castellated gateway were soon lost to view among the trunks of the chestnut forest beyond.

Here, unhappily, some leaves from the ancient manuscript are missing. Conjecture alone may follow the fortunes of Ebreina among the Medici. The commentator concludes that after an edifying declaration of faith she remained at the Court of Cosimo III, and hazards a cynical guess that her parents were not dissatisfied.

But, in Piancastagnajo, among the mighty chestnut trees of her mountain home, she was not forgotten. Long did sorrowing women grieve and pray and devoutly recite the rosary, vainly longing to be assured that the soul of the child they so yearned over was safe.

With a tale so fantastic yet so pathetic in one's mind, it is easier to understand certain phases of the past and not to be unsympathetic toward survivals which show themselves to-day nor to wonder that the slopes and cliffs of Monte Amiata, with their forests, their gorges, their upland pastures and rocky heights, have a population whose character is interwoven with fancy, superstition, and legend. These people have their own customs and usages

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

which vary somewhat in the different little communities, as they inhabit fortified village, ancient abbey, or harsh hamlet where the roofs of the rough stone cottages are loaded to the breaking point with stone to hold the tiles fast in winter storms. They love their region with the tenacity that mountains breed in those who live among them, and they are musical as all Italians are. Gino Galletti, who has so much that is poetical to tell us of Santa Fiora, toward which we journey from Piancastagnajo, says that one who is wise will be able to recognize in which locality of many their *stornelli* and *rispetti* have been composed, and certainly one can easily imagine that songs made in Santa Fiora or Arcidosso might differ greatly from those produced in San Salvatore on the other side of the mountain. San Salvatore left with me an impression of shadow while Santa Fiora, outside the forest and full facing the southern sun, is full of light.

As the road toward it rounds the last spur Santa Fiora comes into view, boldly planted upon a mass of rock projecting from this flank of Amiata and fronting the deep valley, where the river of the same name flows, beyond which rises an amphitheatre of high hills. The entrance to the town is by an arched passageway under the Cesarini Palace, and this opens upon a large oblong piazza, usually sunny and empty, surrounded by high buildings with severe flat façades whose line at one point is broken by a pompous clock tower, the base of which projects itself far beyond the other structures while its top ostentatiously bristles with battlements and machicolations that were long out of date when it was built. But a second glance shows another tower in the background, of far greater bulk, grim, weather-beaten, unembellished, whose base is buried and almost unapproachable in the mass of the surrounding houses while it lifts its head aloft to remind us

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

of the days when it bore an important part in the warlike life of the place. At the root of it was the prison where Ghinozzo of Sassoforte suffered at the hands of one of the Counts of Santa Fiora, he of that branch of the Aldobrandeschi family that Dante speaks of as the very type of feudal tyranny. Looking up at this dark tower the picture of those men with their fierce customs, their blood retaliations, their relentless warfare seems to take shape in one's mind and the story of Ghinozzo to become real and present.

It was in the year 1329 that the Count of Santa Fiora was at war with Ghinozzo of Sassoforte and for this reason Ghinozzo entered the count's borders with a company of horse to do him harm. The count went out to meet him and thereupon a battle took place. Now Ghinozzo had a horse of wonderful intelligence and prodigious strength and a great sight it was to see him mounted, for so perfect was the understanding between them the two then seemed to become one. Unfortunately in the battle just referred to, Ghinozzo was overcome and he and his charger were taken to Santa Fiora where he was thrown into prison. One day the count's lieutenant, being at the fortress where Ghinozzo was confined, saw the famous horse about which he had heard so much in the courtyard and desired to ride him. The steed allowed him to mount but refused to be guided by him, appearing either stupid or obstinate, nor would he obey even when spurred. Ghinozzo, well guarded, was present and after having looked on for a time he said, "If you like I will show you his paces and the way to manage him."

"Do so," said the lieutenant, chagrined at his failure, and he dismounted and watched while Ghinozzo took his place. The powerful horse instantly became docility itself; at a touch of the bridle, at a word, he showed off all

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



PIANCASTAGNAJO. A GATEWAY

his accomplishments. Back and forth in the restricted space he trotted, galloped, or caracoled as his master directed, the lieutenant gazing the while in astonishment and admiration.

Ghinozzo pined for freedom and as he felt again the splendid movement of his horse under him his muscles grew tense, his spirit rose, and a wild thought came to him: risking his life might he not snatch liberty? As he continued to direct the horse, his eye eagerly searched out the point at which he might make the attempt. Then suddenly he gave a ringing shout and the astounded guard saw the courageous animal launch himself into the air like a mighty bird. Over the parapet he disappeared, and as his hoofs rang upon the rocks below Ghinozzo's voice came back to them, "He who would take me let him come to Sassoforte!" The crestfallen soldiers gazed into one another's faces speechless; they had witnessed

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

the impossible, their prisoner had outwitted them and escaped before their very eyes.

When the Count of Santa Fiora heard it he was filled with rage and disappointment and swore never to rest till Ghinozzo was retaken; so the war kept on more fiercely than before, till at last, between Magliano and Montiano, he again encountered his enemy. Ghinozzo fought gallantly, his noble horse performed wonders of daring and agility; but it was in vain, they were borne down by numbers and the whole company was forced to surrender. Then Ghinozzo, seeing the day was lost and that by no effort could he save his followers, once more trusted himself to his steed. Hewing his way through his foes, the invulnerable horse beating them down before him with his powerful hoofs, he gained the road and as before fled away like the wind. But this time the wrath of the Count of Santa Fiora was implacable; exasperated at this second failure, he called a few followers about him and set out in pursuit. Over hills, through forests, across torrents they followed, while Ghinozzo, like a will-o'-the-wisp, now appeared, now disappeared in the distance. At length the castle of Accesa came in sight, and Ghinozzo, thinking it a good asylum, took refuge there; the great gates clanged behind him and he was safe. The count, more enraged than ever, determined not to be altogether balked again, and laid veritable siege to the place, posting men in all the passes leading to it, and this he did with such vigilance that no help could reach it nor could any one leave it. After some days Ghinozzo, convinced that he could neither send for succor nor hope to be successful in flight, surrendered and, this time under a strong escort, was returned to the dungeon of Santa Fiora. There he lay till all hope of deliverance left him, and the story ends briefly and sadly, "he died in prison, by reason of his little eating." Of what happened to his faithful horse history

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

takes no note. Here before us stands the prison where he lay and pined for the sweet light of day that he was never to see again. Deprived of liberty, life was hateful to him and he chose to end it by the only means in his power.

After a while the line of the Santa Fiora counts dwindled till out of that great family there was but one heir left, a girl; and so the *contea* passed through her marriage to the house of Sforza and thence to the Cesarini. To these families are owing the palace and gardens we see to-day. To reach the latter we leave this part of the town and on our way come to the parish church where the beautiful della Robbias are that Santa Fiora is so proud of, and which it is a pleasure to be able to look at, still in the places they were made to fill; the flowery font, the Resurrection with its interesting details and the touching Ascension. One regrets that they are filmed with dust, and the church when I saw it was being cheerfully decorated for a festival without a thought of first cleaning it, which, it was only too evident, it had needed for many a day. From the church a series of steep descents leads to the river and to the sweet old garden which time has almost converted into a forest, dark and cool even at midday. There is a deep shady pool there, where the water in its course is detained for a while till it flows on, pours through openings in the garden wall, and drops to fill the humble laundry tanks outside where the women gather and where they often sing together as they work. With young and old, hereabout, music seems to be a natural mode of expression. They sing alone or together at home, they sing at the wells where they meet when they draw water, in the fields, on the roads, and especially on festa days. When, in autumn, the young girls go into the forest, turned golden after the frost, to gather the falling chestnuts, they still sing, sometimes happily, sometimes yearningly, touched

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

by the melancholy of that poignant season or perhaps by the thought of a lover gone far away to find work.

For the young men there is not the time or the impulse to raise their voices much till the end of the week. On Saturday night they become vocal and by Sunday the spirits of the tired lads, many of whom work in the sulphur mines, have so revived that they wander in groups through the country singing as they go and perhaps at evening, safe in the darkness, one may go with a guitar to serenade his sweetheart.

Decorum here, as in other places in Italy, seems to require that the sexes shall take their pleasure separately, and groups of pretty girls in their holiday best walk apart, hardly exchanging greetings with the lads of their acquaintance. It is not that they are not very conscious of one another, but meetings do not occur lightly, rather do they take place in some quiet nook where two go by mutual understanding.

There is also "the singing of May" (*il cantar maggio*), when a band of young girls, dressed in the beautiful old Sienese costume so rarely seen now, the red bodice, the striped petticoat, and the broad-brimmed straw hat decked with flowers, goes from one village to another caroling the joy of spring. There is also a kind of musical dialogue that girls and men sing together at that season as they go into the fields to weed the grain. The children, too, have their own plays that include music, and a pretty sight it is to see them go through their duets and choruses as they poise and warble like their own birds and as untiringly.

One of their May festivals has bacchic features and ends in much draining of wine flasks which afterward are flung high in the air that they may break into a thousand fragments as they reach the ground. This is accompanied by great shouting of choruses to which the excited children

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

contribute their shrill voices and do likewise with their own small flasks, for not one must remain whole after this celebration. On the eve of San Giovanni there is a prettier custom when the enamored youth leaves at the door of the girl he loves a sheaf of fruit and flowers, concealed in which is a letter telling her that she is his true love and his choice forever.

As for legends, many of them lurk among these heights, and one quaint one deals with the security of a certain portion of the highway between Santa Fiora and Bagnolo, about halfway toward Piancastagnajo, where on either side lie great masses of rock apparently torn from the mountain above and fallen here. Long, long ago a shepherd passing that way with his little flock suddenly heard in the distance the howl of a hungry wolf. Struck with terror he sounded a note upon his pipe to collect his sheep, and the docile creatures followed to the trunk of a great chestnut tree and crowded about him there. The shepherd, trembling, put up a fervent prayer and at the same moment he saw the ferocious beast break through the bushes not far away, and stand still for a moment looking to see where his prey was. He was famished, his open jaws were terrible, and his eyes flamed like fire. Hope died in the heart of the shepherd when suddenly he perceived a miracle: his prayer had been heard, the Madonna had interposed, the pitying tree bent its obedient branches to the ground and enclosed him, the leafy wall thus formed became impervious, and the defeated wolf was unable to penetrate it. With fearful howling at which the poor sheep shrank and trembled, he ranged round and round the tree, but after many attempts he slunk away discouraged, and the shepherd, first giving thanks upon his knees, went safely on his way with his flock. Near the place there is carved in a rock the figures of the Virgin and Child so that now travelers are always protected in

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

that spot where, besides the weird shapes of the rocks which filled them with superstitious tremors at night, they were frequently startled by the flitting of the malign *ignis fatuus* to be explained away by no flippant mention of fireflies.



PIANCASTAGNAJO





ARCIDOSO FROM THE SOUTH

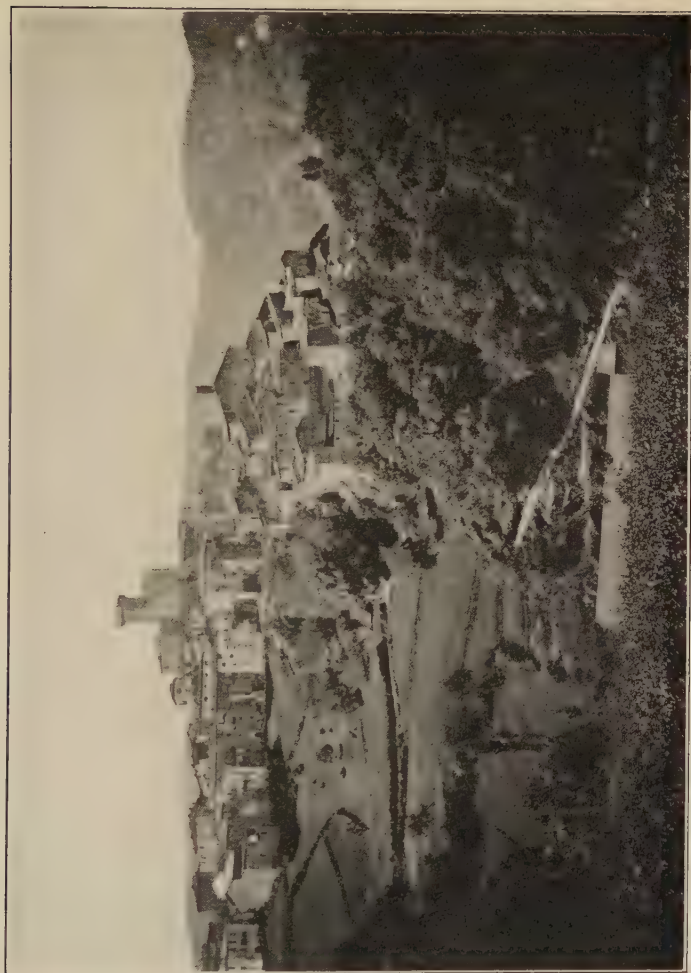
CHAPTER X

ARCIDOSO—TRIANA



THE distance to Arcidosso is not great, but because to us it was an unknown road, and also because of having left Santa Fiora when the sun was setting, it seemed long. The road follows the convolutions of the mountain, through continuous beautiful forest with openings now and then where there will be the house of a *contadino* and his little farm.

We drew up frequently and asked our way, "How far is it to Arcidosso?" The Tuscan is both sympathetic and encouraging. At the first inquiry a lad shouted "Poho!" (local pronunciation for *poco*), that is to say, "Oh, no distance at all, you are almost there." But so did the second inquired of and the third who, however, shortened the word to "Po!" which resounded cheerfully out of the darkness. A fourth and fifth were similarly brief and reassuring, so that we seemed always to be just arriving



Arcidosso. Town and Castle.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

instead of pursuing our indefinite way; but this was of little consequence in comparison with the friendly and benevolent spirit that supported us.

At last we saw the lights of Arcidosso, and, descending a little and crossing a bridge, we entered the main street and proceeded till we reached an inn, the *Albergo Conterio*. Here we alighted at an austere doorway within which was a vestibule, empty and freshly whitewashed, showing a stone staircase leading upward. There was a bell and we rang it; it reverberated loudly from above but that was all. We rang again and as it was still unanswered we began to mount the stairs. All was silent and empty, but on arriving at the third floor we encountered the landlord, leisurely and genial, coming to meet us. He assured us they were prepared for guests. Would we desire dinner? We were eager for it. Very well, his wife was out visiting but he would fetch her and we should have it at once, and soon a pretty, smiling young woman came breathlessly up the stairs and welcomed us with effusion. Large as the framework of the establishment was, and we had it entirely to ourselves, the force consisted of but the husband and wife, their little boy of twelve, who was being taught to wait on table, and a wrinkled cook of great age who lurked in the background; with the general air of unconcern that prevailed it was no surprise that dinner, instead of being ready as offered on the instant, was an hour in the preparing. When it was served it was food worth waiting for, and never have I seen a more assiduous hostess. Having provided a meal excellent and complete, Signora Conterio still hovered about the table watching the appetites of her customers and searching her mind for additional morsels to tempt them.

The *Albergo Conterio* is an establishment of resource and there are certain jars in the pantry holding dainties invented by the hostess, and if on having this divulged to

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

you, you express interest she will produce them and urge you to try them. Also I have known her to despatch her willing husband across wet fields at six in the morning to find the best figs in the valley when she has discovered you are fond of that fruit. Thus it is clear that it is no misfortune to spend a night in Arcidosso as you journey, or many nights if you have a fancy for lingering in a sweet, aloof spot among the mountains to ramble and to rest. After our meal we were shown to pleasant, airy rooms, which I hope may have remained as clean and orderly as they were then when the Conterio family had just assumed the lease of the hotel and felt acutely the dignity of responsibility.

Daylight the next morning showed us the external aspect of Arcidosso which has a character quite its own, for, having long ago lost its walls, it is entered casually from the green country outside it by way of a broad street where the buildings, rather ample and dignified in type, do not crowd upon one another and there is plenty of light and air. It is only at the farther end of this street that one comes upon the older portion of the town, picturesque mounting and tortuous. Every such place should compose itself symmetrically about its castle and Arcidosso does so; the granite rock upon which the *rôcca* is founded rising at the right point to a fine platform which supports the deep brown rugged structure with its diversified bulk and high battlemented tower. It is approached by stairs and narrow passages and is the only gloomy thing in the village, for it has been converted into a prison, though not, I am glad to say, for the lengthy incarceration of prisoners but rather as a place of detention till its inmates are brought to trial.

From it one looks down upon tile roofs, the tops of many cypresses, and a delicious old garden, very spacious but empty now, and sees how Arcidosso lies on the softly



Triana.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

moulded slopes of this beautiful upland valley, the centre for a scattered group of smaller villages that show themselves upon hill ridges or among groups of trees all forming as lovely and pastoral a scene as can well be imagined. Two streams flow past and many white roads wind between them; northeast lies the summit of Monte Amiata and southwest the steep mass of Monte Labbro where still stand the bleak ruins of the buildings erected there by David Lazzaretti, a prophet of the last century called the Santo Davide of Arcidosso, whose rapt spirit seems still to walk among those heights as he lives in the secret hearts of many of his believers in this valley.

Besides its prophet the region had also its poet, that Giovan Domenico Peri, *contadino*, who was so characteristic a product of the mountain. His parents were humble folk of the neighborhood, but, being fondly anxious for their little son, sent him early to the village school. While there, terrified at a brutal punishment he saw inflicted by the master upon one of his companions, he slipped out of the room and fled. To go home would mean to be returned to the school. Instead he climbed to the lofty pastures above his home and for three years remained there with wandering shepherds, undiscovered yet often able to gaze down from those heights upon the clustered roofs of Arcidosso. One of these shepherds taught him to read Tasso and Ariosto and the boy, already endowed with a poetic temperament, developed an absorbing love of verse.

Reading of this, one's fancy travels back across the three hundred years to picture a shepherd of the high hills with a little child wandering beside him as day after day he guides the flock among the lonely heights of Amiata. Perhaps they sometimes pause upon a knoll—keeping the flock in sight—above the beautiful tumult of domes and crags, of greensward and running water that from where

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

they stand is flung downward to the plain; the man's voice utters the melodious syllable, the measured line that turns to pure music in the ear of the child as he listens, breathes it in, and remembers. And at night, under the stars, beside a flickering fire, the old heroic tales pour forth again from the stored memory of the shepherd and the boy listens entranced till the endless flow of the voice, the pulsing movement of the verse, overcome his senses and he is lulled to sleep.

At last his father who had sought for him anxiously found him and took him back to his home but no longer insisted upon sending him to school for the boy begged to be given instead the care of the oxen; and as he guided them along the furrowing soil his mind was filled with fanciful imagery, and when the hours came that he was free from labor, his village companions gathered round him in the open air and he not only poured forth *rispetti* and *strambotti*, but pastoral dramas, to the delight of his hearers. After a time his fame passed beyond the borders of Arcidosso, and one of the Strozzi invited him to come to Florence and recite his poems before the grand duke, Cosimo II. Peri had now been married several years and the invitation to leave his home and his beloved mountain did not tempt him, so that it was only after long persuasion that he reluctantly ventured forth into the world. Even then he refused to change the fashion of his clothes and insisted on appearing at the Florentine court in rough homespun with his goatskin cloak over his shoulder.

In the great sala where he was received there were gathered many of the nobility and the learned men of the city all curious to see the rustic poet. Cosimo sat in the midst and at his feet crouched his dwarfish court fool. It is said that the duke, if lacking in taste, had a merry humor, and when Peri entered he burst into a loud laugh

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

provoked by the *contadino's* appearance, though he had consented beforehand to receive him in his country garb. Giovan Domenico gave no sign of embarrassment at this mortifying reception but stood quietly waiting till Cosimo asked to hear some of his verse. He then bowed gravely and produced a manuscript from which he began to read. He had not read far when suddenly the obnoxious jester sprang at him and shouting derisive insults began to beat him with his fists and accuse him of stealing the poetry he was reciting as his own. The poet no more embarrassed than before flung off the creature with a few smart blows that sobered him and sent him cowering to the feet of his master.

Cosimo now interposed and questioned Peri as to the originality of his verse and asked for an improvisation. Peri returned his manuscript to his pouch and at once broke into a series of lines in which he satirized so pun-gently the dwarf who had outraged him that his hearers applauded with delight and the interview ended in a triumph for the poet. Cosimo ordered his "Destruction of Fiesole" printed and promised that every year there should be given him a quantity of grain sufficient to feed himself and his family. He would have detained Peri in Florence for the idle entertainment of his court but the poet could not be prevailed upon to remain, and, sturdily climbing upon his donkey, made his way back to Arcidosso. Hardly had he arrived and been rapturously received by his friends when he heard that the Duke d'Onano was traveling through the country and would soon reach Arcidosso. Giovan Domenico had perhaps noted some things of advantage to remember during his stay at the court for he lost no time in preparing to meet the duke, and, awaiting the cavalcade upon the highway, he addressed him in a rapid flow of witty and cajoling verse in which he told of the privilege conceded him by Cosimo

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and suggested that his grace the duke should show himself no less generous. Since the Grand Duke of Tuscany had provided him with bread for the rest of his life, would it not be a graceful act on the part of his Highness of Onano to supply an equally necessary element of food? Bread consumed alone is undeniably dry. What if it should be supplemented by the wine that might so admirably accompany it. Otherwise, in order not to die of thirst, one would be constrained to content himself with water, a cheerless drink at best.

The nobleman smiled goodhumoredly at this harangue and granted the request, ordering that Giovan Domenico should receive thereafter a sufficient number of barrels yearly to assure that he and his family might drink their wine undiluted.

The poet was not spoiled by his brief contact with the luxury of a court, and clung as tenaciously as ever to his peasant life. Only once more was he persuaded to leave Arcidosso, and this time the invitation was to visit Rome where his host would be the versifier, Ciampoli, a mediocre writer much admired at that time and overwhelmingly vain. To him it had occurred that it would be highly amusing to show off this obscure *contadino* and make game of his pretensions in a company of the literati of Rome. Again, with distaste and reluctance, Peri was persuaded to leave his home and journey to the great city, but this adventure was no more agreeable to him than his Florentine experience. He pined for his mountains, and the grandeur about him only pierced his heart with homesickness. Ciampoli was bent upon having the diversion of his presence at a dinner to which he had invited many of his friends, and after the utmost urging Giovan Domenico agreed to attend and for once to lay aside his country dress and put on the conventional costume which was prepared for him.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Ill at ease he entered the stately dining room and when he saw the table set forth with shining silver and endless dishes of rich food his gorge rose. This then was the wasteful and wicked luxury in which the rich dwellers in cities indulged. He thought of his little home and of the appetite and good cheer that gave zest to the plain fare with which he was so content.

He took his place at the board and began with gingerly hesitation to eat of what was placed before him, but before the banquet was half over he suddenly sprang to his feet and began to shout and gesticulate like a lunatic. He declared he was the victim of a conspiracy, that they were in league to poison him, and with this he dashed out of the room, flung off the fine clothes that had been given him, dragged on his own rough garments, seized his scrip, and ran from the house deaf to all remonstrance. This was his last concession to fame, and whatever may have been the inducements held out to him afterward he never again forsook his home, and there he happily lived out his days with his wife and his two daughters, one of whom he must have especially delighted in as she inherited his facility in versification.

Early one morning I woke to unaccustomed sounds in Arcidosso and looked down from my high window upon a surprise. The whole street had blossomed over night into a country fair. Booths and long tables were set up and a busy, cheerful crowd, discussing, buying, and selling, moved everywhere between and about them. Now there is no longer anything to invite desire in the objects offered for sale, even in the most primitive Italian village—such is the discouraging solidarity of the world of commerce in these days—but the buyers in themselves are always entertaining. From far and near they were gathering in company with their great slow-moving oxen from the north, from the south, from the west, along the winding roads that lay between the gay green fields, they ap-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

proached—hardy *contadini* with their sturdy wives, perhaps bringing a child or two; pretty girls in smart blouses of crimson, corn color, or blue, with shining hair and blithe faces ready for the periodical excitement of market day. There had been a shower a little earlier and some of the umbrellas in use were still raised. Blessings upon the custom that makes these umbrellas pea green in color and of a texture that becomes translucent when wet! Dotted along the way they resembled great bubbles of crude glass of the tint of sea water.

Here and there were half-grown calves, two at a time, linked together at the neck, the younger couples a little restless under the restraint, the older fast learning to take it patiently and walk soberly as it is their lot to do when age has fitted them for their laborious destiny. Their glossy hides were of a bright tan color which changes to silvery gray when they have reached maturity. The oxen collecting that day were nearly all *bovi di Maremma*, a breed nearer the wild state than any other, exceedingly strong and hardy and, withal, moderate eaters. They are content with straw in default of a better hay, with occasional green food in summer and in winter a little bean meal sprinkled over the straw to add nutriment to it. Learning early to walk in pairs, they begin to work at three years of age, first at drawing carts, then, as their strength increases, ploughing. After ten years they begin to deteriorate, and at last they are rested and, alas! fattened for the butcher. Their flesh is much liked by the peasantry as it is considered that it makes far better *brodo* than that of younger cattle. It is said that in the Maremma the cows while their calves are young are fierce to the point of being dangerous. The white Chiana oxen, seen upon the other side of Monte Amiata, are as heavy but taller and with short horns—a tamer breed, more carefully reared and scientifically fed.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

As soon as possible I went down to take part in the gayety of the fair and examine the wares offered for sale, and though my purchases were slight, being confined to some lengths of very fine hair rope, I enjoyed the occasion with the best, and felt my acquaintance with Arcidosso and its region would have been incomplete if I had missed the gathering. With reluctance I was about to turn from the Monte Amiata district to another part of Tuscany, though not before having a glimpse of the other fortresses of the counts of Santa Fiora, Casteldelpiano, and Triana, only a few miles away.

Southwest of Santa Fiora stands Triana, fashioned by feudal arrogance as an impregnable fortress of the Aldobrandeschi. It rises from a fine spur overlooking a pass which must always have made it important, for the road from Santa Fiora and the Monte Amiata region forks here, one branch leading to the busy town of Manciano and the other through Scansano to Grosseto. These were old highways of travel and Triana was excellently placed to swoop down and collect road tolls from those who perforce passed below its battlements. Those battlements are all obliterated now, and the high, square tower shortened. What is left to-day is a mere conglomerate mass of building of which some portions differ slightly in height from others and all are covered with roofs hardly more imposing than flat lids. One gateway has been rebuilt but in its contrasting newness it adds nothing desirable to the eye, yet, though shorn of its once menacing air, Triana still couches there upon its rock, a sentinel over the valley it has watched for eight hundred years.

In 1351 when there happened to be four Aldobrandeschi—Andrea, Giovanni, Aldobrandino, and another in authority, for in that family the power was divided equally and not concentrated in the eldest brother—a code was drawn up for Triana, which is illustrative of the feudal usages,

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

laws, and penalties of that time, and long remained the standard of government there. If we are to judge by the rules framed and by the particularity of the details, the people of Triana were an unruly group, not slow to anger and ever ready with tongue, fist, and weapon. With regard to the latter the idea of forbidding or limiting the carrying of arms even by children had not been thought of at that time, excepting as it applied to strangers, and a sentinel at the gateway of Triana required any such to lay everything of that nature aside before entering. For the safety of the inhabitants in this castello an official called a *caffaggiaro* was responsible. It was his business to patrol vineyards, vegetable gardens, fields, and even the woods adjoining, for the forests were so carefully guarded that a case is recorded at Arcidosso where permission to clear away a few trees in order to plant grain was not obtained without considerable difficulty. Vineyards, too, were the subject of special care and each person was obliged once a year in the month of April to plant one hundred grape cuttings. Attention was also paid to bee hives, and it will be seen that the duties of the *caffaggiaro* were by no means light for all must be kept safe from trespass by man or animals, and the latter, if wandering, returned to their proper place.

Besides all this there was the danger of alien pilferers, brigands, and, far worse, companies of adventure, who might be looked for at any moment and warning must be given promptly. The *caffaggiaro* carried a little horn which he blew at intervals for reassurance, and when its tenuous note reached the ear of the shepherd boy on the hill, the ploughman in the field, the vine-dresser, or the digger bent among his vegetable beds, it must have carried with it a sense of comfort and protection that we of this age can hardly comprehend any more than we can feel the sickening terror that struck to their hearts when

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

danger threatened and the *caffaggiaro* rang the great bell of the castle. This might mean that signals from the hilltops had reached Triana and a band of pitiless demons would soon be upon them plundering and burning. Then they must think quickly. Could they drive in the cattle? Could they collect the sheep? Was there time to save any part of the harvest, or must they lose all but their lives, and those, too, if they delayed too long? Small wonder that there was a punishment for ringing the alarm bell without legitimate cause.

The everyday life of Triana was strictly regulated as to seemly conduct, and every breach fitted with its penalty. Respect for parents, correction of children, and retaliation for injuries to relatives were taught. No one was to be permitted the practice of magic, such as divination or incantations for bringing evil to others. Bad language was discouraged and there follows a list of injurious terms. One might not call another thief, homicide, perjurer, forger, or bastard under penalty of a fine of ten soldi and especially must the shocking name heretic (*patarino*) be unspoken. To throw this in the face of any one was so gross an offence that it cost twenty soldi. One exception with regard to bad language is made. For a husband under provocation it was allowable to use any excess of epithet to his wife and also to beat her if he saw fit. In another portion of the document it is added that to accuse a man of having killed his wife shall not be construed as a serious discourtesy, although to imply to a wife that she has made way with her husband cannot but be counted as a mortal insult. The behavior of women appears to have caused lawgivers much exasperation, for still earlier than this, in a Sieneese statute enacted in 1294, it is written, "Women are a sex to be looked upon as most dangerous in disturbing the course of justice."

Swearing is forbidden, one may not swear by his body,

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

his blood, by God, the Virgin, or any male or female saint of the Lord, and if to these last he applies any vulgar word the offender is to suffer a heavy fine and, if unable to pay, is to be put in irons. To proceed from violence of word to that of deed, faults of the latter class were scheduled in order such as: first, to snatch a man's cap off; second, to spit at him; third, to seize him by the clothes or the hair, and here it is particularized as to whether he whose hair is pulled falls to the ground thereby, whether he is dragged, whether he bleeds, or whether he suffers a broken bone, for though to throw a stone, to strike or to kick, brings a loss of ten soldi, the sum mounts rapidly as the injuries become serious. In many cases the above punishments were doubled if the offence was committed in the presence of the Signore or his family or in church. In the Signore was vested the right of judging and punishing all criminals such as counterfeitters, robbers, assassins, etc.; the last appeal was to him only and it is easy to understand that in these isolated, tyrannically ruled castles very terrible injustice and cruelty often took place, indeed, certain feudal practices and not infrequent incidents are nothing less than appalling.

Social obligations were also to be observed; for example, the inhabitants must not sully the public fountain nor allow their pigs to defile it, neither must they dry linen in piazza or against the town walls. Sweeping must be attended to regularly; that is to say, from April to September each person must sweep that portion of the street in front of his own door once a week. During the days between he was allowed any amount of unpleasant accumulation as long as he remembered to drive a stake into the ground near his threshold and cause the heap to grow about it, not spreading too far. Any person who wished to throw water out of a high window must first call "*Guarda!*" three times in a loud voice for the warning

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

of passersby. Fruit trees near a boundary line were the subject of special rules. If certain branches of one over-spread the ground of a neighbor, then the fruit of those branches belonged to him nor must "the owner of the trunk" or his family attempt to enter the premises of that neighbor and collect any of it as it was his property. Also if branches overhung the road and fruit fell upon the ground any one passing that way might gather up as much as he could carry in his hands without reproach.

All laws enacted in those days were severe upon strangers, who were always the subject of suspicion and in general fared ill. They were an obnoxious class outside the law, they could not bring an action, and, in Siena at this time, if one was killed, the fine was but a third of what was exacted if the victim were a citizen. In the country the Signore could take the law into his own hands in such cases and he seldom troubled to consult any other authority. Is it to be wondered at that when the young communes thought to gain firmer control of the feudal barons by ordering them to come into the cities, they found they had introduced an element of turbulence and insubordination hard to cope with, for these gentry attempted to carry on there the same independence of law which they had practised in their inaccessible castles, and when they were fortunate enough to capture an enemy, judged him without asking any participation by the city authorities and also dealt the penalty. In Florence itself it was no uncommon thing to see torture being applied openly at the gates of private individuals, as in the Bostichi family whose house was known through the city for the fact that the torture of prisoners went on there almost daily.



AN OLD PALAZZO IN SAN CASCIANO

CHAPTER XI

THE MERSE—RAPOLANO



ONE day I left Siena to drive in the valley of the Merse, that tributary of the Ombrone, which, after flowing past the monastery of San Galgano, takes its way northeast among many hills till, a few miles from Siena, it suddenly doubles upon itself and turns directly southward through the broad level meadows of its name. In a space no larger than that which Tuscany occupies the variety of character in its valleys is a continual surprise. There is the wide, opulent Val d'Arno, great avenue to the sea, full of busy towns under old castle walls, teeming with the life of to-day yet exhaling the spirit of the past, weaving before one dreams of the wars, the pageants, the dramas it has witnessed; the Val d'Elsa with its beauty, its sunny fertility,

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

its memory of tragedy; the Val di Pesa, so pretty and diminutive with its tiny stream, its glowing green benches of cultivation, its toy bridges; and, in contrast, the Garfagnana with its noble width, its mountains of height, its wondrous walled villages. Then there is the gentle Val di Merse where, among smooth green meadows full of grain, the beryl-green river flows slowly and noiselessly and deepens in still pools under the shade of tall white-stemmed poplars. These valleys and many, many more are jewels in the crown of that incomparable land.

The boundaries that enclose the floor of the Val di Merse are abrupt, darkly wooded hills from whose sides such castles as Capraja and its opposite neighbor, Castello di Notte, look down. Castle of night, what took place within your walls that you carry that ill-omened name? Perhaps you are old enough to have belonged to the Ardengheschi, that particularly pestilent family that so long tormented Siena. Their territory reached almost to the walls of the city and, safe in their gloomy fortresses, they could drop down upon the highway that led past to Grosseto and the Maremman seaports and strip the unhappy traveler. When the feudal power began to yield to that of the growing communes, the Ardengheschi of necessity submitted and they were then made to promise they would build no more castles in the valley of the Merse.

Some fifteen miles down these meadows a by-road turns out of them to the right and begins to mount and, with many zigzags of uncommon steepness, to carry one farther and farther into the heart of the hills, among woods that look as wild as though never disturbed by man. Evergreen oaks are in great number and under them grows wild box in vigorous masses and, where shade is thickest, beds of fern. It was in autumn that I saw all this and about me rose the incense of that fragrance which such

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

undisturbed verdure gives forth after the first rains, sweeter almost than any of the fresh odors of spring. Presently as we climb slowly there appears through the leaves a small white church, embowered in green and bracketed against the steep hill on a broad flagged platform whose low parapet shows the marks of its age as it stands there, still giving comfort and protection to the scattered people who till the small patches of ground or carry on charcoal burning among these hills. The little sanctuary is so secluded, so peaceful that it looks as though it must have developed from the retreat of some hermit, loving nature as well as holiness, and if so he chose well. One or two small houses have grown up near it and, across a ravine, only a stone's throw away, stands an example of the humbler class of villas one occasionally comes upon in such retired places. It is not to be taken for a farmhouse, though many a farmhouse is larger, for there are certain marks that differentiate a villa that has undergone adversity from a *casa colonica* no matter how extensive and important it may be. For example, this one has a pretentious gateway flanked with two solid pillars topped by heavy stone balls, and the main entrance, some fifteen feet above the level of the ground, is approached by a broad flight of steps with solid balustrades.

In the small courtyard stands a well-head and in the garden, close by but separately fenced about, is a stone-bound pool of water—used for irrigating purposes but so disposed as to form a charming feature there instead of acting solely as a utilitarian adjunct—while, from the upper terrace of the garden there is a beautiful prospect of tiny valleys and wooded knolls descending toward the east. As for the pockets of soil in the irregular ground, they must be exceedingly rich if one is to judge by the vigorous growth of everything from olives and grapes to roses. A democratic garden it is, where things of beauty and of

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

use grow side by side and add to one another's attractiveness by their juxtaposition. And why indeed should a plant that has been put under the yoke of servitude to man at once become an outcast from the society of idle loveliness? There is less of this separation in Italy than elsewhere and we of other lands might well consider it.

It appears that this villa was once the country seat of a rich proprietor whose estate was of great length and breadth, but whether through misfortune or improvidence, his holdings shrank till there remained but a few farms. With the departure of prosperity there disappeared also the owner himself and a tenant now occupies the house and tills the soil about it for what return it yields him. It will have been seen that the court, the garden, and even the features of the landscape which form the setting are all on a somewhat diminutive scale and the house also is externally a modest mansion of two low stories, compactly planned, without much embellishment, and with the years, too, somewhat out of repair, but in the main room of the interior one comes upon an amusing surprise. It opens directly from the entrance without the intervention of hall or lobby and is an apartment of rather stately proportions with a large fireplace and a tiled floor. At the first glance its aspect is quite impressive, but at a second one guesses by its furnishing that its early owners must have divertingly parodied here the state they kept up in their town palazzo. The walls are hung with canvases of great size and pretension but worthless execution, the settees are roughly sawed out of inferior wood and stained, while their pompously mounting backs are decorated with coarse carving and ill-painted coats of arms. There is also a banqueting table, mediæval in intention, and high-backed chairs of another period and of as worthless workmanship as the settees. One feels at once like putting on a costume showy with cotton lace and tinsel and having

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

recourse to paint, powder, and glass jewels in order to get into harmony with a grandeur of this type.

Ostentation ceases at this apartment, however, and the rooms which succeed it are simple and comfortable enough and of moderate size till one reaches the opposite end of the building where there is one, corresponding in shape with that first described and probably not always used for storing grain for which it serves at present. The lower story, of course, contains a vast kitchen whose canopied fireplace is furnished with seats where a family might keep warm on the coldest winter evening if, waiving ceremony, they were so disposed. Then there is the special room for flour sifting and bread making, the enormous oven for the baking being built outside the house, and the *cantina*, where wine in wicker-covered flasks, olives, cheese, and all the excellent things produced upon the place make a goodly show. The many ground floor rooms and their uses are quite bewildering to a foreigner, but at last one emerges from the house and is shown the farm animals which are kept so beautifully clean that their close proximity is not noticeable. There are the silkworms, busy weavers, whose eggs are literally bought by the thimbleful, at so much according to that measure, the two snow-white heifers, gentle and beautiful as deer, the fowls, the sleek donkey, and, last, but of greatest bulk, the pig. Pig, did I say? No such name befits a creature of its size and dignity, so little removed from its ancestor the wild boar as its white curling tusks are evidence. The gate to its apartment being opened, the owner invited it to come forth. After looking the company over for a moment it did so, slowly and with labored care, for its great body moved upon legs of a slightness that gave insufficient support. Having walked forward a few steps it settled down opposite us upon one side with something between a sigh and a groan and fixed its small green eyes upon us with



A Villa in Val di Merse.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

an expression at once so intelligent, so cynical, and so appraising that I can never forget it.

Perhaps it will have been surmised that the tenant of this happy villa is new in his occupation of it and hence the pride he takes in it and his willingness to show off to a sympathetic acquaintance all its details and advantages. If in his new life any lack is felt it is that of congenial intercourse with people of his own class, for there is inevitable loneliness in being so far removed from easy communication as one must be in the solitariness of those hills. It was therefore interesting to find that there is no habitation so hidden or inaccessible as to be avoided by guests of a certain kind as the following will illustrate.

The tenant is possessed of a lively, inquisitive little son of twelve and one day at noon the boy who was playing in the open ran in to find his father and excitedly announce a visitor with demands on the household.

"I asked him what he wanted, father, and he said half a litre of wine, some bread, and some cheese. I asked him what his name was and he smiled a little and said it was Tri-Tri and that you were expecting him. Were you, father? And shall I tell him to come in?"

"No," said the tenant slowly, "let him stay where he is but you may go down and get what he asks for and take it out to him."

The child hastened away to do so and thereafter during the time the leisurely stranger remained and partook of the meal he had ordered, the boy ran to and fro carrying brief bulletins. "I asked him where he was going and what he was doing and where he slept but he only smiled at me. He smiles a good deal. He is dressed much better than you, father." "I would not see him myself," added the tenant afterward in relating this incident, "one has to tolerate people like Tri-Tri, but one need not encourage them."

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

"He told me, father," said the boy in one of his reports, "that he is not going to ask you for anything more to-day than the food you have given him because you are not the owner here, but he says Signor —— (naming a proprietor near by) must give him five lire in money and much more of things to eat. How did he find out that you were not the real padrone, father? He knows a great many things."

To such moderate terms as these are the gentlemen of the road reduced at the present day. Tri-Tri long since chose his mode of life and laid out the route he preferred. He knows his business well and is familiar with the affairs of every one in his chosen clientele, so that he can balance his requirements to suit the income of those he lays under tribute. The agent of whom this farm was leased had told the tenant Tri-Tri was to be looked for and that he had better be given whatever he demanded. It is not very long since much more was expected and was always yielded without argument. The wife of a *contadino* living in a remote part of the country such as this would usually have a small table carefully prepared and set at one side to be ready on the moment for a visiting brigand, and when he arrived felt constrained to serve him with the best at her command. It will easily be realized that now as then the aloofness of a neighborhood like that which the tenant has chosen offers the natural field for a gentleman like Tri-Tri to operate in, its seclusion being its pleasantest and safest qualification.

At the castle of Ripa d'Orcia, about fifteen years since, a bolder brigand than Tri-Tri appeared one day and besides money, exacted the best food that happened to be ready to serve. To consume it at leisure and at the same time to take precautions against interference, he looked about for a safe position and chose it where there was an angle in the steep roadway that climbs to that little fortress

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

some thirty feet from the inner gateway and perhaps three hundred from the next turn below, he thus commanded the approach. He seated himself on the parapet, the top of which on the outside was fifteen feet from the ground, at that place a steep and stony pitch, and was enjoying his meal when two men came suddenly round the lower bend in the road. One glance at them was enough, they were *carabinieri* whose duty it would be, whether they relished it or not, to arrest him. Without a moment's hesitation he sprang upon the wall and leaped from it to the rocky ground beneath. In doing so he, of course, ran the risk of broken legs if not of death, but he was fortunate. Unharméd, he made a series of bounds like a hare down the declivity to the river and at incredible speed scrambled up the opposite bank and was lost in the shrubbery.

Standing at the point from which this robber had made his spring I heard the tale from one of the men employed in the castle who added with amusement that the two *carabinieri* who figured in the story turned out to be a couple of inoffensive visitors perfectly innocent of any evil intention in regard to the hero of the unnecessary exploit. I inquired what sum of money he had come to ask for and the reply was, "*I do not remember what at that time the amount of the tribute was.*" Another well-known bandit who goes by the affectionate diminutive of Biondino is now in prison serving a seven-year term, and before long even the mild practices of a Tri-Tri will be a thing of the past.

About thirty miles east of Siena lies a group of hill towns interesting as well for their own beauty as for certain high lights of Tuscan history that once touched them. Some are upon the slopes toward the Chiana Valley, some a little withdrawn among the hills, and all differing with that charm of variety which never fails in the Tuscan landscape. From Siena they are easily reached by rail-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

way or highway, and from Chiusi the road is shorter still. These towns are Rapolano, Lucignano, Marciano, Sinalunga, and Torrita. If the starting point of our little journey is Siena we leave it at the southwestern gate known by either of two names, Porta San Viene or Porta Pispini. It came by the former, its earlier one, in the twelfth century when the long-desired remains of San Ansano, Siena's patron saint, were borne into the city through this portal amid an exulting throng shouting, "*Il santo viene! Il santo viene!*" Passing under its frescoed arch and coming out upon the highway we drive through low hills for some six miles, gradually approaching the famous battlefield of Montaperti, and who without a quickened heart can gaze upon the ground where that crowning struggle between the Guelfs and Ghibellines once strewed the ground with dead Florentines—"the rout and the great slaughter that dyed the Arbia crimson."

The area fought over lies to the north of the road. One looks toward the little rounded hill with its group of high-trimmed cypresses where stood the castle of Montaperti, and down upon the River Arbia, a pretty willow-grown stream, as pastoral and innocent as though it had never flowed red with blood in the great hour of Siena's triumph. Somewhere upon its banks at the end of that day lay wrecked the mighty *carroccio* of Florence that so proudly started forth with bell and banner in the early morning. One can fancy its progress, slow, majestic, secure of victory, as it moved into position. It shone brilliant red in the sunlight, the eight chosen bullocks that drew it were covered to the hoofs with rich drapings of red. From the centre of the car rose the staff tipped with its golden globe from which floated the flag of the Commune. In front of this a group of warriors rode, behind it the trumpeters blew blasts of joy and defiance. As the day waned, the battle raged around it till at night with broken wheels it

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

lay, disabled but not deserted, the faithful few still fighting off the foe and Tornaquinci and his seven sons defending it till one after another they fell beside it.

Make friends with a venerable peasant who lives hereabout and he will tell you that at midnight of a full moon, ghostly hounds, white as the moonlight, run hither and thither across the ancient battlefield baying their hoarse lamentations. Siena and Florence are at one now, yet all the centuries that the ploughshare has passed over these fields have not quite smoothed away the ancient enmity among some who bear the historic names of that day. As we stood looking at the quiet landscape that bore not a suggestion of war or violence, I said to my friend the Sienese:

"Professor ——— has written so vividly of this region will he not go further and write of the Val di Pesa?"

"No," said the Sienese with a slight stiffness of manner, "he will never write of that. It is in Florentine territory. He is of Siena."

Not far from the field of Montaperti stands the simplest of small white churches dedicated to San Ansano. You approach it under the leafy roof of an avenue of horse-chestnuts, lighted when I saw it by many a cluster of white blossoms. Where the avenue comes to an end an oval space is left before the little building, upon which stand a carven well-head and a tiny shrine. The whole is surrounded by a line of slim young trees supporting garlanded vines, like a delicate frame fitting the gentle memory of the young saint who here so joyfully gave up his life in martyrdom. Tradition describes him as a noble Roman youth who suffered under Diocletian. At the age of twelve he became dissatisfied with the pagan instruction he was receiving, listened to the teaching of the Christians and was converted. He was baptised and at once began to preach the new faith. His family, horrified at his

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

conduct and in terror of the danger into which it brought him, used every effort to make him renounce his belief but in vain, and even the Roman authorities made it easy for him to escape from the prison where they had confined him. Thence he betook himself to the Pope whose blessing he sought, after which he traveled toward Siena, where he finally set up his tent upon the banks of the stream Arbia.

The idolatrous inhabitants of Siena, filled with curiosity, crowded out of the city to see the young Roman who so oddly had settled himself in their neighborhood, and to them he ardently preached Christianity and denounced their graven images. At first they were infuriated and would have fallen upon him and killed him, but his tender age, his beauty, and the miracles he was performing made them hesitate, and presently many of them were converted. This was soon known in Siena and Ansano was seized, carried to the city and imprisoned, but it appeared that no dungeon walls could contain him and by morning he was again at large and preaching with fervor in the very streets of the city. This time a detachment of soldiers, sent to arrest him anew, surrounded him, but when his converts would have defended him he put them aside and advancing toward the soldiers submitted to be chained with such sweetness and serenity of mien that many of his captors were melted to tears and became converts upon the spot. "Alas!" continues our chronicler, "The obdurate Roman proconsul roared like a volcano in eruption when the saint was for the second time brought before him, and attempted to terrify him with the most ferocious threats." But seeing that Ansano remained unafraid the proconsul, almost bursting with rage, ordered his martyrdom to be of supreme torture.

He was borne away and thrown into a boiling cauldron, but lo, the water became instantly cold. It was next de-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

creed that he should be beheaded. On the way to the spot, a little beyond the walls of Siena where the execution was to take place, they passed the palace of the proconsul himself before which stood a much venerated idol. At the moment the young saint arrived before it the idol fell to the ground at his feet and was dashed in pieces. At the place of execution Ansano raised his face, shining with ecstasy, to heaven, and kneeling laid his head upon the block. As it was struck from his body the lips moved and the awed spectators heard him dedicate Siena forever to the Virgin. At this, the time of his death, he was but nineteen years of age. His followers sadly buried the body and erected on the spot an humble oratory, which became a shrine for many pilgrims. The remoteness of the spot, the sunny stillness, the simplicity and beauty of the setting, seem in harmony with the story of the young martyr, and one is glad on entering the little sanctuary to find it richly fortunate in the possession of a madonna and saints by Pietro Lorenzetti. It is said to be the master's first work and is lovely in spirit and color.

West of San Ansano the way lies for a space across clay hills once arid and forbidding, now being gradually tamed to the uses of the husbandman. But before reaching Rapolano one emerges into a fairer region with oak-covered hillsides and flourishing cultivation. Rapolano, ancient stronghold of the Berardenga counts, from whom it passed to Siena, still shows parts of its ancient fortifications, but over and about all its antiquities crowd recent buildings. It looks flourishing. There are new paving stones; new drainpipes, painted scarlet; and new shutters, of vivid green. It has, in fact, an air of prospering in the present and purposely ignoring the past. There is even a lead-colored band-stand upon a bare new piazza outside the gate, there is also a poor inn which has not yet caught up with civic progress. But though Rapolano is not

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

one of the endearing cities of Italy it possesses a jewel that any among them all might well covet, one of Neroccio's most beautiful madonnas. Why this lovely Virgin should have been moved from place to place in Rapolano I do not know, but at the time of my visit she was in the retirement of a small unused church popularly known as Il Santo, securely locked and damp within; but whatever the difficulty of access I advise no traveler to miss the happiness of seeing her. She sits there, an exquisite, slender creature, her head bowed a little over the child, who as an adorable golden-haired baby, pushes with one hand against his mother's breast while with the other he supports himself on her knee as he bends eagerly toward Saint Anthony. On the other side of the Virgin stands Saint Hermengildus, crown on head, with a robe wrought of dim crimson and gold, a noble presence both princely and saintly.

A search for the key that unlocked this treasure sent us to Poggio Santa Cecilia a mile or two east of Rapolano, but the delay turned out a piece of good fortune, since the road leads by pleasant ways into a charming valley. Ringed about with steep hills it has a level floor from which rises a smaller conical hill detached and perfect in contour. From base to summit this is covered with ilex and pine shading a beautiful undergrowth. The road which in ascending encircles it, is planted with pillar-like cypresses. Emerging at the top from all this greenery you pass through a gateway and so into a little street which leads to a flowery garden where stands the villa, combining the remains of ancient wall, arch, and portico, and from the parapet before it one looks out upon a beautiful peaceful view of billowing hills gradually converging to a natural gateway through which the eye sees to a far blue horizon. The little fortress that centuries ago crowned this height sustained in its day a historic siege, for in the thirteenth

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

century the men of Arezzo, together with a band of Siennese exiles, held it against Siena for more than a year, till those within gnawed the leather of their shields for very hunger and in their thirst were forced to catch the dew for drink. At last there came a night of storm, the wind howled and the rain lashed the castle. Protected by the darkness and the noise of the tempest the exhausted garrison fled, but whether they reached safety is not surely known for the story has two endings, and the sadder one says the fugitives were taken and put to a cruel death.

After leaving Poggio Santa Cecilia and Rapolano behind, it is not far through winding valleys before we reach San Gimignano, once a strong fortress and of great age for it belonged to the Scialenga counts in the twelfth century. Like Poggio Santa Cecilia it has been converted into a villa and in form bounds three sides of a quadrangle and possesses one stout gray tower left over from the old time. Boldly placed on a spur which overlooks a smiling valley it is yet not greatly picturesque because of the evident newness of its late additions, the construction of which embodies practicality at the expense of harmony. Having admitted this hard truth I put it behind me and declare that San Gimignano will remain with me forever as an unforgettable picture touched by the magic of the hour in which I came upon it. The afternoon was waning, a brief shower was just over, the sun striking brilliantly from under a bank of cloud shone down the narrow valley and spanned it with the perfect arch of a rainbow. Under it every color partook of the intensity of a jewel, the gold of mounded genista, the green of the turf, the blue of the distance, all were glorified. Opposite, still under the shadow of retreating clouds, the dark tower called Violante, once the shelter and lookout of robbers, emerged from the darker forest of ancient oaks that covered the height above. Everything dripped and glittered and I

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

knew that each leaf and grass blade down below suspended a crystal globe that held the world in its minute mirror. Little pools of water lay reflecting the sky in the hollows of the worn stone on the ramparts over which I leaned, and moss and lichen, moistened and refreshed, turned emerald and ivory. Down in the court a white peacock stepped daintily across the flags.

Then as we left it and passed down the valley in the evening light, we looked back and distance smoothed away those modern accretions, and San Gimignano with its stout tower, aloft upon the rock where it had sat for centuries, retired into antiquity again and the Scialenga counts nested there once more and bade defiance to Siena.





SARTEANO. THE CASTLE

CHAPTER XII

LUCIGNANO—MARCIANO—TORRITA—MONTICHIELLO—
CHIANCIANO—CHIUSI—SARTEANO



LUCIGNANO, noble walled city, as Repetti calls her, stands finely aloft with an altitude of two thousand feet, upon the western rampart of the Chiana valley a few miles from San Gimignano. If the traveler approaches her in a leisurely mood, which is the only one through which to make friends with the small shy places among these mountains, he will do well for she is the most pictorial and characteristic one of the group, full of charm and of simple beauty. I am tempted to advise taking a first survey of Lucignano from a parallel hilltop that lies a stone's throw to the southwest. To this spot I strayed one day and, clambering one of the mighty foundations

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

of the fortress begun there by Cosimo dei Medici, discovered how admirable a view of the city, its setting and the country it commands, was to be had from that point.

Looking at it thus it composes in a way to delight the eye. Complete in itself and completely covering its hill, you see, rising from its spheroidal outline, two towers, one at the north and one at the south, while, between, the mass of the *collegiata* forms the summit, lightened by three *campanili a vela*, two rising from the Palazzo Pretorio and one from the church of San Francesco. The whole is set in green and trees break the severe lines of the architecture here and there, even to the top, where, beside an ancient and unrestored tower, are two or three silvery olives. By its very position Lucignano was doomed to suffer the hard fortune of a fortified town upon a natural boundary line; century after century she passed from one ownership to another, being annexed in turn by Arezzo, Perugia, and Siena, with a brief period of independence, till at last she submitted voluntarily to Florence. This was in 1553, and when Siena, too, had passed into the same hands, Lucignano renewed her allegiance to Cosimo. He at once directed the restoration of the city walls and the construction of ample wells and cisterns which had been urgently needed, but also he ordered the building of this very fortress from which we look from a superior height across a grassy depression, and so, slightly downward, upon the town of Lucignano. It is a curious juxtaposition, the little city walled for defence and yet commanded by this other castle, planned for prodigious size and strength. Was its motive protection or mistrust? At all events, it was never completed though the lockings and bracings of its huge stones show what it would have been. In certain places fifty feet of wall rising from the lowest point of the foundation look as perfect to-day as they could have been three hundred years ago.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

In my exploration of it I was joined by a smiling, sociable boy of fifteen whose beautiful face and gentle manners made his companionship the more welcome. After a little we came upon an angle at the base of a wall, a lovely spot embowered in wild shrubs and carpeted with grass. The sod was threaded with orchids frail and exquisite, all daintily clad in purple velvet and mauve crêpe. I gathered a few, but sparingly; not for the world would I have depleted that little garden. We sat down in its charmed quietude to talk. The faint fragrance of crushed grass rose about us in the mild warmth of the late afternoon. We were very happy. Facing us was a stone archway that denied us entrance but provided conjecture, the upper half opening into hollow darkness, the lower buried in the earth. The boy knew all about it, he was entirely confident that it was the opening to an underground passage between the fortress and Lucignano; he pointed out the direction; oxen had broken into it while ploughing the ground for that new road below us. Always feeling hospitably minded to details of this kind I agreed with him that the evidence was indisputable and we gazed into the archway with renewed interest, though the blackness inside gave up no secrets. Then we reverted to the present and talked of various things, life in Lucignano, the artichoke crop, the wages for road mending. Meanwhile we walked over to the town and strolled first under the outer walls which truly are among the prettiest in all Italy. A diminutive term of this kind has an incongruous sound as applied to fortifications, but since such survivals have passed their warlike age and become merely picturesque features their character and treatment have changed.

The walls of Lucignano show every shade of gray and yellow stone, weather-worn red brick, and patches of discolored plaster, from the apertures in which drop sprays of green, while at the top garlanded vines form a cornice.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Many little gardens stretch from the first line of houses inside to meet this cornice; they are green with shrubs and gay with blossoms. These are the humbler houses but there are other buildings with fine old windows and pillared loggias all equally adorned with clinging creepers and bright flowers. You may pass into the town by either of two fine entrances, Porta San Giusto or Porta San Giovanni. At the latter the two huge halves of the inner gate, fine examples of their type, are folded back into the wall, presenting a surface covered with the conical heads of great bolts clinching the heavy planks of which they are made, the lining on the inner side being of sheet iron. In the day of Lucignano's importance these gates were wellnigh impregnable, now they serve to embellish the series of arches that lead into the little city, which is unusually clean, and, on the high open piazza, has an air of being sedulously swept. The town hall, austere and undecorated, stands on one side and opposite is the *rôcca* rebuilt, but good. The church of San Francesco with its fine simple portal and rose window is built of courses of a hard gray stone and a soft green one, with the result that time has worn and channeled the latter so as to produce an effect of color and irregularity very pleasing in effect.

The interior of this church is large and bare. It has not escaped the vandalism of obscuring whitewash and the hacking of doorways through its pictured walls, all the more to be mourned that there are interesting and valuable frescoes as well as pictures here, the work of Bartolo di Fredi, Fungai, and even Signorelli. Over the second altar on the right is a fresco by Bartolo di Fredi; Death rides a horse fleet as the wind; he is not represented with the face of a skull but with an intent determined human countenance. His long light hair streams behind him and the scythe hangs at his side, while he is in the act of sending an arrow from a bow. Behind him are the aged, the sor-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

rowful, the lame, with arms outstretched in eagerness to detain him but he has passed them by, while before him are two happy and unconscious lovers chosen for his shaft. Efforts have been made to uncover other frescoes and charming faces look down upon you here and there from rifts in the confusion of these attempts. If you are not of the forbidden sex, a nun may perhaps consent to take you through a little door near the high altar and so upstairs into the conventual portion of the building, where are other treasures.

One does not leave the neighborhood of Lucignano without going to Marciano—which lies so near it upon one of two long hill ridges to the north—because, though it is a little, poor place, it is great in memories, for, from the deep red tower that still lifts its broken summit in the midst of it, there watched those who witnessed the battle of Scannagallo, that conflict, so terrible, so piteous, that broke the heart and the power of Siena before Florence took her into captivity. On a hilltop not far away stands a mocking reminder of it, the little white temple piously built by Cosimo to commemorate his triumph and named by him the church of the Victory.

There in this spot, upon that July day upwards of three hundred years ago, the forces of Cosimo dei Medici, coming to conquer Siena, faced the Sienese led by Piero Strozzi, across the brook called so well Scannagallo, the brook of slaughter and soon, as once the Arbia, to run thick with blood. More lay between these armies than the desire for victory; their two leaders, Marignano and Strozzi, confronted each other with the ferocity of personal hatred; on the one side Marignano, as secure as superiority in numbers and carefully planned corruption could make him; on the other, Strozzi, gallant, headstrong, and over-confident, he who had fatally lost that earlier moment to strike that might have changed everything;

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and both supported by unstable mercenaries whose one thought was the booty to come after the carnage.

And over in Siena lay Monluc, burning with fever yet panting to be on the field, "*Je mourais d'envie d'y aller, mais le sénat n'en fut d'avis*"—Monluc who had adjured Strozzi to stand on the defensive and risk no such trial of strength as was now to take place, while Strozzi disregarding his counsel had paraded his glittering, be-plumed warriors to this battle as though to a holiday tournament.

The end was assured before the first shock of arms. Marignano's cavalry began the attack. It was met bravely; when the turn of his Spanish foot-soldiers came they fell upon their knees to invoke the blessing of Heaven and sprang up eager to slay and to plunder. Hardly had the battle begun when Strozzi saw a detachment of his French soldiers falter, turn back, and begin a retreat bearing the ensign with them. It meant defeat. He desperately rallied his men, and fought bravely till he had had two horses killed under him and fell sorely wounded. He would still have remained upon the lost battle ground, but though he resisted he was borne away to safety by his flying troops, and while his wounds were bound up by a Franciscan friar he heard the imperialist shouts of victory, and in his anguish was fain to die. Merciless slaughter followed; the stream was choked with the dead and dying, the road toward Siena was strewn thick with the corpses of Strozzi's men and Lucignano which he had tried to make secure was surrendered to the enemy without an attempt at defence.

The news was carried to Siena and, with the first shock of it, despair seized upon the people; the city rang with sobs, screams, and curses. Crazy women ran raving through the streets, they thronged about the votive chapel in the Campo, they crowded into the cathedral, and flung themselves upon the pavement in agony for their lost



Lucignano. Porta San Giovanni.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

legions and for the slavery that threatened them. But as the bleeding stragglers from the battlefield began to come in they calmed themselves and turned to succor them and pitifully bind up their wounds. The city had already been in a state of siege for five months, yet the women generously brought of their slender stores of food and wine to distribute to the bleeding Germans and French as well as to their own people. After the first outbreak of terror the Sienese did not falter in their determination to hold out to the last against the hated Florentine yoke, and we have already seen how unspeakable were the sufferings they endured for the following five months of the siege till, starving and exhausted, the remnant of the population left alive was forced to surrender.

Strozzi, when he had partly recovered from his wounds, had taken refuge in Montalcino where he was attempting to collect his broken forces and send help and food to Siena, but before this he had searched out the Count of Mirandola's standard-bearer who had led his men in the treacherous retreat and hanged him. Sozzini tells us that the very day before the battle the man had been visited by a messenger from Marignano, this messenger was a *contadino* who carried to him twelve metal flasks full of gold crowns which were marked Trebbiano wine, that very wine called by the poet Redi in his "Bacchus in Tuscany" "*il vero oro potabile!*"

So the battle of Scannagallo was fought and the ultimate fate of the men and women of Siena decided. Of the heroism of the latter in that conflict there lives a tradition, borne out by the curious evidence to be noted in some small carved panels near the altar in Cosimo's Temple of Victory. These show certain fiery amazonian forms taking their part upon the battlefield beside the men of their city in that last struggle for liberty.

As I turned away from Marciano to return to Lucignano

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

over that road once soaked with the blood of Siena, I looked back and remembered the words of a Siennese of to-day: "Among the undulations of those fields play blood-red reflections and on the hill of Scannagallo the Medici dome, built in the loneliness of the spot, receives the sunlight and sends a white ray toward the ramparts of Lucignano, while from a distance is borne the voice of a girl singing as she comes homeward with her sheaf of herbs, the familiar song of her countryside,

" . . . O Piero di Strozzi
Ferito nel fianco
Da palla nimica,
Fra gli urli e singhiozzi
D'amara fatica,
Morire volevi
E non il potevi. . . ."

As compared with other towns of this group Torrita has a tame situation and is externally less arresting, but it is a typical *castello* and its streets remain contracted and dark as of yore though the houses have been shorn of those evidences of antiquity the eye searches for and the civic buildings upon its piazza have suffered sad disfigurement in the name of restoration. This is a personal judgment and sounds like cold indifference toward splendor and celebrity when contrasted with the opinion of the Abate Luigi De Angelis who in 1821 wrote a little book about Torrita. He announces himself upon the title page as belonging to the University of Siena, Librarian of the said city and secretary for life of the Academy of Fine Arts, and gives as the explanation for producing his work at that time that a great distinction had just been granted the inhabitants of Torrita, that of being allowed to march in

*Montepulciano, Chiusi e la Val di Chiana F. Bargagli Petrucci.



Marciano. The Castle.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

solemn procession through the streets of Siena bearing their miraculous image of Santa Maria dell' Olivo which they devotedly worship and venerate.

"For this reason," he says, "I have conceived the wish to celebrate to the world their spiritual joy and to commemorate it with some lasting work honoring their native town which shall be worthy the ardor of their devotion."

This amiable desire he finally decided to embody in the form of a book giving the history of Torrita and biographical notices of the most illustrious of its citizens. "For," he writes, "though far from inglorious is its name, through the carelessness of earlier historians it has been neglected while meriting to be better known."

He regrets that certain authors allow themselves to be transported by fervor of feeling rather than held by the sober study of truth and resolves that his shall be a work which discriminates fairly among claims to immortality. "I cannot, I will not, I ought not, to pretend to infallibility," declares the ardent Abate and he proceeds to bind himself, whatever may be his personal enthusiasm, to be temperate and to look at all things in their true proportion, quoting Seneca to remind himself that "a small vessel upon a river looks great while upon the ocean it is insignificant." He then develops the plan of his work which is to be divided into two parts, the first devoted to the life and labors of Fra Giacomo di Torrita and the second to an historical account of the town itself.

Although the famous men whose names adorn the annals of Torrita are many he chooses to dwell thus particularly upon Fra Giacomo as being the most noteworthy and he wisely remarks, "To rescue a town from obscurity it is enough that it has produced an illustrious man. Stagira had not been remembered in history but for Aristotle, and the name of the foremost restorer of the mosaic art in Italy suffices to bestow renown upon Torrita." By patient

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

research he traces the remains of this artist through the different churches where they appear. Among them are Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome and San Giovanni Laterano where his name is found inscribed. His mosaics are also in Assisi and in 1225 he was working in the baptistry of Florence. He died in Rome in 1295 and the Abate sums up his fame in the assertion that he was the greatest artist prior to Giotto.

He then proceeds to devote the remaining and larger part of the volume to Torrita and in the following flowery language describes its situation: "Upon the summit of a tufa hill thirty-three miles from Siena, among happy olive groves rises the noble city of Torrita. From her left flank she beholds sunny Montefollonico, pleasing Amorosa, gracious Petriolo, and greatly fruitful Fratta. To the right, exposed to the southern sun, lies the most ancient city of Chiusi. Nearer stand Montepulciano and Pienza and to the east all the rich and teeming Valdichiana, only to breathe whose salubrious air to-day reminds us of the generations that have passed since Fazio degli Uberti complained of its malign influence."

Here follow some well-known lines of Dante after which the Abate indulges in two or three Latin quotations and gives a long list of populous villages now existing where once malaria reigned. Next he reverts to Torrita and says: "Within its walls this town combines all those things which are necessary, convenient, useful, and decorative in the eyes of her inhabitants, while agriculture, industry, and commerce place her beyond all need to go begging from her neighbors for her means of maintenance."

This felicitous description leaves nothing to be desired by the population of so fortunate a town and I trust that at the present day conditions are no less favorable than those of the last century when the good Abate wrote of it. He declares the origin of Torrita to be of the oldest and he



Torrita. Porta Gavina.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

is right, for there is no doubt that it reaches back to the Etruscan time. Of its Roman period little is known, but its mediæval history was unusually turbulent, for standing as it does upon the slopes descending to the Chiana Valley it was Siena's bulwark of defence against Montepulciano and Arezzo with whom she was frequently at war. An added advantage of its position lay in the fact that the valley at this point was a network of pools and sloughs with here a ford, passable in dry weather, and there a tiny harbor reached by a winding passage in a very small boat. Certain paths near Torrita and the neighboring towns are, it is said, still called *Via del Porto* or *Via del Porticciolo*.

In the middle of the thirteenth century Siena found Torrita of importance enough to order it strongly fortified and a port constructed from which to thread the swamp, and soon after she sent a *podestà* to keep an eye on the inhabitants and nurse their loyalty to herself. The walls rose but again and again they were broken through or torn down, so that, for many generations, the unfortunate population must have had continuous employment in rebuilding them, till in the fifteenth century Siena ordered their thorough restoration, and new towers constructed after designs by Baldassare Peruzzi, and it is the remains of these that exist to-day.

During the inglorious war which took place between Siena and Perugia in 1358 Torrita was necessarily involved, and at the foot of her hill Siena suffered a needless defeat. A battle took place there in which the Perugians were victorious, whereupon exulting greatly in this small triumph, they sacked and burned Torrita, and, vain-gloriously creating a number of knights on the battlefield, they departed, carrying away with them fifty banners and many prisoners. After this the town had a short respite, but besides being bruised in the quarrels between

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

larger cities Torrita was often in danger from the *condottiere* who early acquainted themselves with the unusual fertility of the soil in its territory and the profit of plundering its granaries; and in 1363 the pestilent Company of the Hat found Torrita attractive enough to occupy indefinitely and decided to make it a base for raids upon the surrounding country. Siena, always in danger from these marauders, resolved to send her captain of war, Ceccolo degli Orsini, to Torrita with a company of soldiers but he was ordered on no account to provoke a battle as the Company of the Hat was in great strength and his defeat would be disastrous. Being a fiery warrior and finding the condition of things there intolerable he took matters into his own hands and decided to attack the enemy. The plan was carried out with great spirit on Saint Paul's day and his men together with the people of Torrita, shouting "San Paolo! San Paolo!" made the assault with such fury that the Company of the Hat was completely routed and its captain, the Duke of Urbino, taken prisoner. Great was the rejoicing in Siena. Banquets were given in honor of the gallant Orsini, the rank of *cavaliere* was bestowed on him, and he was loaded with rich gifts. At the same time the authorities carefully refrained from confirming him in his office lest with his hot-headedness he should prove less fortunate in his next disobedience.

In 1419 Siena seems to have felt assured of the fidelity of Torrita since under all her sufferings from without her loyalty had not wavered. She therefore remitted a portion of her taxes and granted certain privileges, one of which was that Torrita should be honored by having a *podestà* of the first order. On the annual arrival of this dignitary he was to be presented with the following gifts, namely: two pairs of fowls, two measures of wine, sixteen loaves of bread, six pounds of candles, two baskets of corn, and a load of straw.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

The Abate in his story describes how in the following century the towns in the neighborhood of Torrita had a sudden access of civic activity and fell to cleansing houses and streets and constructing new buildings and monuments, through which they counted on acquiring fame and the homage of their posterity. Unhappily in the midst of the peaceful days Torrita was enjoying at this time there came a renewal of the plague which so frequently scourged Italy in those years, spreading consternation through the region. The Abate who is no friend of new-fangled remedies tells us that fortunately for the people they knew of no cure but that of supplicating the mercy of heaven, and having implored the intercession of the Virgin, presently the plague subsided. In gratitude for this compassionate interposition they built a temple to their deliverer, dedicating it to the Madonna of the Snows.

Torrita claims the equivocal honor of having been the birthplace of Ghino di Tacco, the powerful outlaw and bandit celebrated in Boccaccio's second story of the last day. He is said to have belonged to the noble family of the Pecorai whose coat of arms, carved in stone, may still be seen there upon the exterior of a building, its design of four heavy chains straining from a ring in the centre. It is related how Ghino strangled with his own hands the judge who condemned his father and brother to death as highwaymen, how he cured the Abbot of Cluny of dyspepsia, how he ran a long course of robbery and violence and at last instead of being hanged as he richly deserved was pardoned by Pope Boniface VIII and given a great priory to enjoy.

One of the gates of Torrita has a heroic story connected with it. In 1553 the Valdichiana was in the power of the Imperial force, and Torrita fell into the hands of some ruthless Germans, who put to the sword every inhabitant who refused to shout with them "*Duca!*" instead of the

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Sieneſe battle-cry, "*Lupa! Lupa!*" These ſoldiers ſeized by the hair an old woman who with patriotic fervor ſtill cried "*Lupa!*" and threatened her with death. The courageous old creature defied them and reſuſed to repeat the word "*Duca!*" They beat her, they tortured her, they nailed her yet living to the Gavinana gate, but with her laſt breath ſhe ceaſed not to whiſper the forbidden word "*Lupa! Lupa! Lupa!*"

One morning, after having ſpent the night at Pienza, I ſtarted eaſtward toward the little town of Montichiello. The way led through an open, hilly country, keeping for a time within ſight of tall Palazzo Maſſaini, towering ſo boldly above the valley and once a Cacciaconti caſtello. Being in the Orcia Valley one encounters *creta* now and again for it is often in ſight yet never covering very large diſtricts. The gray clay is of a grain ſo fine that it is packed and faſhioned into miniature cliffs, ravines, and ſeamed mountain ranges by the action of the rains, but it is alſo eaſily moved and driven by the water ſo that the reſults of agricultural labor applied to it are frequently waſhed away. Sometimes a ſhort graſs grows thinly upon it that the ſheep love as nothing elſe and it is ſaid the quality of cheese made upon ſuch ſcanty paſtorage excels all others. Reclamation is going on and the firſt ſtep taken is that of ſewing the *sulla*, a plant whoſe roots are able to take poſſeſſion and gradually bind the ſhifting ſoil together. The patient *contadino* waits for the proceſs to take place thoroughly and then the area is ready for the plough. One reſult of this treatment is that one paſſes many a patch of ground glowing with the charming roſe-colored bloſſoms of this ſame *sulla*, which for its beauty would grace any flower garden.

After a time the road deſcends to croſs the ſtream Treſa, and then, climbing ſlowly and ſteeply, one comes in ſight of Montichiello, ſtout little walled town whoſe

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

great half-ruined tower rising from among olive trees is all that remains of the fortress that so heroically held out for Siena in 1553. Those were the days when clouds were gathering, when the siege of Siena was almost upon her, the empire was massing its troops, and Pienza had already fallen. Adriano Baglione held Montichiello against Don Garzia di Toledo and when challenged to give it up, sent word he would hold it as long as there was strength in his body wherewith to do it.

This nettled Don Garzia who, to gain speed, had whetted the appetites of his soldiers by promising them the sack of the town. The population of Montichiello at the time was eleven hundred, only one hundred of whom were trained soldiers, but the place was difficult to attack and the enemy had great trouble in bringing the artillery to a position where it could command the walls for there was a natural defence of cliffs and the ground below was soft from the heavy rains that had recently fallen. With great effort two or three guns were dragged to a place as favorable as it was possible to secure. "But," says Repetti, "not for this were they dismayed." A small party of the besiegers then attempted to scale the walls but the men of Montichiello always on the alert were there to meet them. They fought them off, they flung them from the battlements till they retreated bearing with them twice the number of wounded to those of the garrison.

Unhappily in this engagement Adriano, their staunch captain, had been struck full in the face by a stone and so injured that he could no longer lead them, they were suffering heavily under the fire of the imperial artillery, they had held out for more than two weeks, their powder was gone and they had nothing to defend themselves with but stones. Under these conditions there was no hope of resisting longer and it was judged best to surrender at discretion. The flint-hearted Don Garzia strangely

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

enough appears to have been moved by the gallantry of the little band and allowed the common soldiers to go free, holding Baglione only as a prisoner.

To-day the dwellers in Montichiello are said to number four hundred, but to the superficial observer this seems an over-flattering computation; silence reigns in the empty streets and in the small empty church. A few children, clean and promptly obedient, shyly regard the stranger from a distance, and no idle women sit in doorways or lean from windows. The men of the place are *pigionali* and go early to work in the fields of the neighboring *contadini*, only coming home at night, but there are many villages with a population of this kind where the aspect is very different. I have sometimes asked the reason for such contrasts but have got only a smile and the reply, "The population in one village seems to be created from the beginning clean and self-respecting, and that in the next, careless and idle, Heaven only knows why!"

I suspect that one element in the difference is supplied by the character of the agent who has the care of such small places and whether he feels any concern for the lives of the humble people he lives among other than the amount of field labor they can be made to accomplish, for the agent who superintends Montichiello has the reputation of being able, intelligent, and humane.

According to its ancient character Montichiello presents a brave if broken front to those who would enter it. There is the arched gateway with a high square tower on the right and two round ones on the left, all of warm yellow stone and looking as though they had never been repaired since the martial climax of their history. Just inside the gate is a turreted Borghese palazzo with a high *terrazuolo* for which the top of the town wall serves as a parapet. If one is invited to mount to it, it is found to be a fine and spacious one with the irregular façade of the palazzo form-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



A CHAPEL IN MONTICHIELLO

ing its background, a tempting place to linger. There are seats in plenty, and a pair of tables which it is interesting to note are formed of two massive grindstones mounted upon solid stone pedestals. Sitting there one has Monte Amiata opposite with the ragged peak of Radicofani on the left and Pienza on the right. I know no spot from which the latter exquisite little place is so well seen both for its site and surroundings and the charm of its outline and suggestion, and it is pleasant to remember as one looks

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

at it that in one at least of its palaces, taste and affection have recently led to restorations of a type to give comfort to the hearts of those jealous for the beautiful memorials of Italy's past. These are the salient points in the prospect to be seen from that high *terrazuolo* and between are a score of little towns dotting the hills and vales till they are lost in the blue distance. Doubtless, Montichiello was not chosen for the picture thus spread out before it, but if it is sometimes the abode of its proprietor it must give happiness, for the prospect it commands could not be composed with a more exquisite art.

The tower of the fortress that one sees from a distance, massive and stately still, together with a shorter one near it, rises from the high central point of the town, a solitary, grass-grown spot where a few gnarled olive trees keep them company. Portions of the wall, with a look-out, remain also, heavily hung with ivy and giving a foothold at the top for small shrubs that spring happily from between the crumbling stones. In a little church on the way one takes in descending from this place and which has a charming Gothic portal, there is a sweet Sienese madonna, a touching picture in which the baby, with head bent far back, gazes up into the face of the mother. I noted, too, the door of a little marble tabernacle in the wall, a thing of delicate carved decoration, and near it a curious Saraceni *stemma*, a negro's head with a snake curling over it. I strolled back through the small orderly town to the other gateway and took leave reluctantly of Montichiello and then, bearing still farther toward the east, pursued my way toward Chianciano where it stands almost upon the edge of the Chiana Valley. The drive to it, especially in May, is most beguiling, for then the yellow broom and the cistus, with its pink and white discs, deck the hill slopes and the deeper ravines are full of oaks and chestnuts in their spring foliage, while of field



Massaini.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

flowers the variety is bewildering and I know from experience that within a few minutes you may gather no less than forty differing blossoms.

The introduction to the northern gate of Chianciano is by means of a sort of causeway, partly natural and partly helped by the hand of man, but it is a striking approach in any case and as a military defence must have been highly effectual. Standing outside for a moment before entering the portal, you can see the full length of the broad main street to the opposite boundary of the town, and even farther through the southern gateway whose arch is filled in by the blue sky and an exquisite landscape beyond. Thus standing you realize that you are on a lofty place from which the land drops away on all sides, leaving it wide to the sunlight and the breeze and you look out over tree tops on leagues of the beautiful land of Tuscany. The lake of Chiusi lies to the east, the cone of Monte Cetona bounds the prospect in the south, and between lie hill and vale and the polished mirrors of other fair lakes.

The town belonged in the thirteenth century to those border counts, the Manente, who so frequently changed their allegiance from Siena to Montepulciano or Orvieto as advantage swayed them till at last they cast off the domination of both; but with all this Chianciano was less tormented by conquest and destruction than many other towns of its size, while at the same time it was always much frequented by those who put faith in its famous mineral springs. It is, as we have seen, nobly placed, but it is also picturesque in itself; the buildings on the left as you enter mount with an effect of great height, while I am inclined to declare that there is not a more pictorial byway anywhere than the Via dei Sotti which follows the irregular line of the western rampart. Under many arches, some round, some pointed, the street passes as though forming a high-pitched gallery, the inner side of which

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

consists of the unbroken line of its houses, with deeply niched front doors and here and there a little projecting shelf full of blooming plants.

On the main street I am sure I encountered the belle of Chianciano. As she issued from her doorway in all the confidence of beauty it chanced that a country lad with a nosegay of wild flowers was approaching from the opposite direction, and with an imperious air she stopped him and demanded toll of his bouquet. It was an amusing scene. Whether it had been gathered for another or for whatever reason, he proved unexpectedly parsimonious and grudgingly gave her a single blossom. She ridiculed him, enacted scorn and made a feint of claiming the whole. He was obdurate, shook his head and, failing in a rejoinder equal to the occasion, awkwardly flung away. Meantime the postman, young, good looking, and in the smartest of uniforms, crossed the street upon his route and rallied her upon her rebuff. With the pout of a spoiled beauty she saucily waved her hand toward the flower in his buttonhole which he at once gave her with a bow of mocking depth and a smile which showed off his fine teeth.

Dennis, writing in 1845, says the way from Chianciano southward is through forests and past castles. Would that it were so to-day, but all have disappeared, the forests to give place to cultivation, the castles to be first abandoned and then to disappear under the desecrating hand of those who pilfered their stones for building purposes and to whom they meant nothing more than convenient quarries. Yet in spite of what is gone nothing can destroy the loveliness of this region, nor would one spare a mile of the way especially if it is taken in the late afternoon, as it should be, and one comes at last to Chiusi where, golden in the sunset, she rises from the summit of her isolated hill, as serene amid her pastoral surroundings as though unstirred by any memory of the storms that have beaten



A Street in Montichiello.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

upon her head during the course of her long and changeful history. The ground that bears her is sewn thick with the bones of dead heroes, it is hollowed with Etruscan tombs and yields the golden ornaments of the Romans. Chiusi was the wealthiest of Etruscan cities when Rome was in her infancy, and from her impregnable walls she for long defied the armies sent against her. She was Gothic under Totila, the destroyer; later she became Longobard and the palace of a duke succeeded Roman temples and labyrinths; finally she turned Christian and a cathedral rose, incorporating in its walls masses of costly oriental marbles, alien columns, and pagan carvings.

Then came those centuries when she sickened and withered and malaria had its way with her while her strange Laodicean river, which in Roman times was walled and flowed into the Tiber, now hesitated, turned back and, spreading over the valley which under it became a swamp, sent its surplus waters to join the Arno. By this time Siena and Perugia were fighting for possession of her, and during the long course of this warfare Siena built a tower down on the sandy flat beside the sluggish river to command the bridge. This was to defy Perugia and was mockingly named *Beccati questo* (Peck at this). Perugia responded by immediately constructing one a little larger and stronger at the opposite end of the bridge and calling it *Beccati quello* (Peck at this other). The bridge has disappeared but the two ineffectual towers still stand smiling ironically at each other while the centuries go by and the river's current hardly hastens more than of yore.

Although the pestilent swamp was a menace to every one, the rival cities upon its borders bitterly resisted any attempt at interfering with it. It was too valuable a barrier to be deprived of in time of strife. When in the course of time Siena had triumphed and Chiusi belonged to her she succeeded for years in obstructing any attempt

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

at change, indeed, at this time, a romantic ceremony took place annually in April, the symbolic marriage of Chiusi to her cherished morass. The civic magistrate in full panoply, with great crowds following him, descended to the river bank while heralds led the way in all their bravery, trumpeters blew with might and main, banners waved, and the people acclaimed as their magistrate stepped into a skiff (very small it had to be not to ground during the passage) and was rowed away. He crossed the stagnant pools, threaded the narrow water-ways, and, when he had reached the confines of the territory belonging to Montepulciano, cast a ring into the water with solemn ceremonies of espousal.

Only in the fifteenth century did Siena's opposition to draining the valley give way. Listening to the prophecy of a vast and fertile garden yielding untold riches to its cultivators, she grudgingly gave her consent, the miracle was accomplished, and the poor fishers and humble ferry-men sadly withdrew before the builders of dikes and the followers of the plough. From her high-pitched empty piazza Chiusi now looks northward over plains of the richest cultivation in Tuscany, rescued from the death-dealing swamp of former years; to the east and west rise high hill ridges, and southward the pyramid of Monte Cetona and the shining face of little Città della Pieve face each other across a lovely valley full of olives and vine-supporting trees, riotous hedges and fields of crimson clover. It is an undulating valley where hillocks are crowned with groves of oak and streams wind between them while the frequent presence of hamlets and farm-houses emphasizes the productiveness of its soil.

Chiusi as a town is no longer especially interesting, but beyond the lovely prospect it commands it has a clean and comforting inn, the Corona, where the food is good and a pleasant flowery wine is served, and it is a centre



Chianciano. A Street.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



TO THE ETRUSCAN TOMBS

for many drives through a charming country full of sweet wayside enjoyment. If the Etruscans are dear to you you will have had the enthusiastic Dennis as guide and you will be already informed that some of the finest tombs are to be seen here, but even if you are not an impassioned Etruscan, there is hardly a more delightful way of spending a morning than to go in search of them. By the novel means of a cart drawn by two mighty oxen you may, if you like, be conveyed over rutted roads cut into the steep hills till, at last, stopping before an insignificant opening in a grassy bank, you enter the hillside and find yourself in the hush of two thousand years ago. Upon the painted walls of this tomb nothing of line or color has changed in all that time. The lady who is your hostess here sits watching the games which proceed in her honor and with

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

her little parasol held lightly above her head becomes as human and familiar as yourself.

A second tomb not far away but of a different character is also most interesting, and the beauty and quietude of these two will perhaps carry your memory back to Florence where, in the small archæological museum, there is one of the most unusual memorials ancient Etruria has left us. A tall figure carved in stone, now smoothed and weather-worn, lies stretched at full length upon a bier, a figure so softly relaxed, so peaceful that it possesses a more human and moving quality than any other of that age that I know. Marking the four corners beside head and feet are four round cushions, which if you observe closely you will see to be four ducks forming circles, as, with their heads beneath their wings, they sleep also, a perfect example of conventionalized decoration.

One of the excursions I have spoken of as pleasantly taken from Chiusi is by way of the little winding valley of the Astrona to Sarteano and Cetona. Crossing over the line of hills which rises opposite Chiusi to the west, the road descends into that pretty vale and for some five miles bears toward Sarteano. When I first traversed it the weekly fair of that town was in progress and the way was bright with the gayest of painted carts. Scarlet was the prevailing color and their sides bloomed with the most vivid tints, while ambitious owners had added their full names as part of the decorative design. As for the great, placid oxen, if they knew vanity it was justified, they trampled along the highway perfectly groomed and dripping with scarlet tassels, while even their tails had been treated with scrupulous care and the terminating locks combed and curled.

The older women walking by the wayside followed a happy fashion of wearing orange-colored kerchiefs over their heads, while the younger, sensibly disinclined to



Sarteano Castle. The Drawbridge.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

conceal their pretty hair, had left it uncovered but wore gayly flowered scarfs about their necks. Moving slowly along with this congenial procession we entered Sarteano and drew up at one side of the piazza to enjoy the scene. It was early and there was no crowding as yet, people were slowly collecting and neighbors from the country were greeted by the townspeople. Such a couple encountered each other near me, a young husband and an older friend; he must have been a young husband to take so dramatically the inquiries after his household. His wife? A blithe wave of the hand. The bambino? an upward glance of repressed rapture. The family in general? A smiling bow and an outward turn of the wrist; and so the animated exchange went on with sympathy, vivacity, quick response and eager gesture that made the tepid communication of more sophisticated beings seem tame and colorless.

From the pleasant bustle of the piazza I turned to the streets that rise gradually to the level of the castle which occupies a great space at the top of the hill. Towering there upon its oval base and looking north to the territory of Siena and south to the Papal dominions it was the most important stronghold of the Manente, the family that was the centre of so much disturbance from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, at which period Siena contrived finally to subdue it. By that time the gloomy feudal fortress of the earlier period was ruinous and the Siennese built a noble castle upon its foundations of which much still remains, the double circle of walls, some of the towers, and the central keep with its drawbridge. In the seventeenth century it came into the possession of the house of Fanelli as a gift from the Grand-Duke Leopold, and the members of that fortunate family still hold and enjoy it. They have treated it with rare taste, making judicious restorations which do not disturb the beauty of all that is

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

old, and such is the extent of the original enclosure that a villa in the midst of well-grown shrubbery and a garden of great extent are held within the outer circle of its walls and so adapted as to seem no encroachment upon antiquity. Generosity to travelers allows one to wander in that happy garden, where the splendid remains of the castle rise among flowers and caressing creepers and the green tranquillity of ancient trees. Passing through all this to the western rampart one may rest upon a stone bench and look out from a leafy tent upon one of the fairest prospects in Italy, stretching away across the lakes of the Valdichiana to distant Cortona, and across to many a height beyond the boundary of Tuscany.

There is a museum in Sarteano with a numerous population of reminiscent Greek heroes upon Etruscan reliefs and endless small objects, the plunder of many toinbs; but its outdoor aspects are more attractive to the idle wayfarer, and in unfrequented nooks there are curious and pictorial bits to be discovered. If, for instance, you should find yourself in the Street of the Almond Tree—a crooked little passageway more like a mountain pass than a village street, where the houses stand close against gigantic rock masses—there, looking almost as old as they, rest the stone blocks of an ancient foundation, which carry the imagination back to the legend concerning the origin of those turbulent Manente counts who made Sarteano such a thorn in the side of her neighbors. The founder of this family is said to have been a gallant gentleman called Piero Cento-Scudi, a soldier of great prowess and as handsome as he was strong. He was known as Piero Cento-Scudi for the reason that he wore a hundred golden scudi at his belt for the hundred tournaments he had fought and won, and, being high in office at the court of the emperor, he looked upon the emperor's beautiful daughter and fell deeply in love with her. After what wooing he was able

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

to carry on in secret as occasion offered he gained her affection in return and for a while they concealed their passion, but, afterward, despairing of being permitted to wed, they fled away together and came to Tuscany where they took refuge in Radicofani. There they continued to dwell and there seven sons were born to them.

After many years the emperor in his progress through his domain came to that part of Italy and halted in the valley of the Paglia, not many miles from Radicofani. When Piero heard of this he hastened to make favor with certain of the barons in that noble company, and having brought them to see his wife and his seven comely sons he urged them to beg the emperor to overlook the disobedience of his daughter and grant forgiveness to her and her husband.

The barons touched by the sight of this goodly family returned to the encampment and, first conferring together, they asked a grace of their imperial master. The emperor magnanimously consented to grant it without insisting upon knowing what it was, and they then revealed to him their desire that he should pardon Piero and related all that had taken place. The emperor's heart was softened and he promised his forgiveness, ordering that the whole family should be brought before him without delay. This was done and when he beheld his daughter and her beautiful children he was overcome with emotion and, embracing them all with tears, forgave them and acknowledged them as his kin. The oldest son he made Count of Sarteano with much land thereto and bestowed upon all of them rich gifts of diverse kinds. So Piero and his family left Radicofani and journeyed to Sarteano fifteen miles away where they and their descendants lived and ruled for full five hundred years.

Of course the authenticity of this agreeable narrative has been called in question, hard history disputes it, but

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

at least the counts Manente of Sarteano, from the eleventh century on, were possessed of Piero's martial qualities; they practised fighting as a fine art, and when not busy at home hired themselves out impartially to fight other people's battles, and they were always in demand. For the rest, the history of Sarteano repeats that of other small towns in the Sienese domain.



CHIUSI





BADIA A SPINETA

CHAPTER XIII

CETONA—BADIA A SPINETA—SAN GIOVANNI D'ASSO—
MONTEFOLLONICO—MONTISI



FROM Sarteano it is about four miles to Cetona, nor to my thinking can there be found a town more perfect in type, more exquisitely framed in country loveliness than this, with its castle tower rising above secular trees, its houses in subordinate ranks below, its neighboring villa garden all spired with cypresses, while the ground, dropping from it in successive terraces, is plumed with olives, verdant with grain, and broken by little settlements of conical hay-ricks. It crowns the top of its own hill while higher mountains form a wall behind it. The key of the castle may be had in the piazza and one finds there is little left of it beyond the tower with its seven-foot walls, but you are allowed

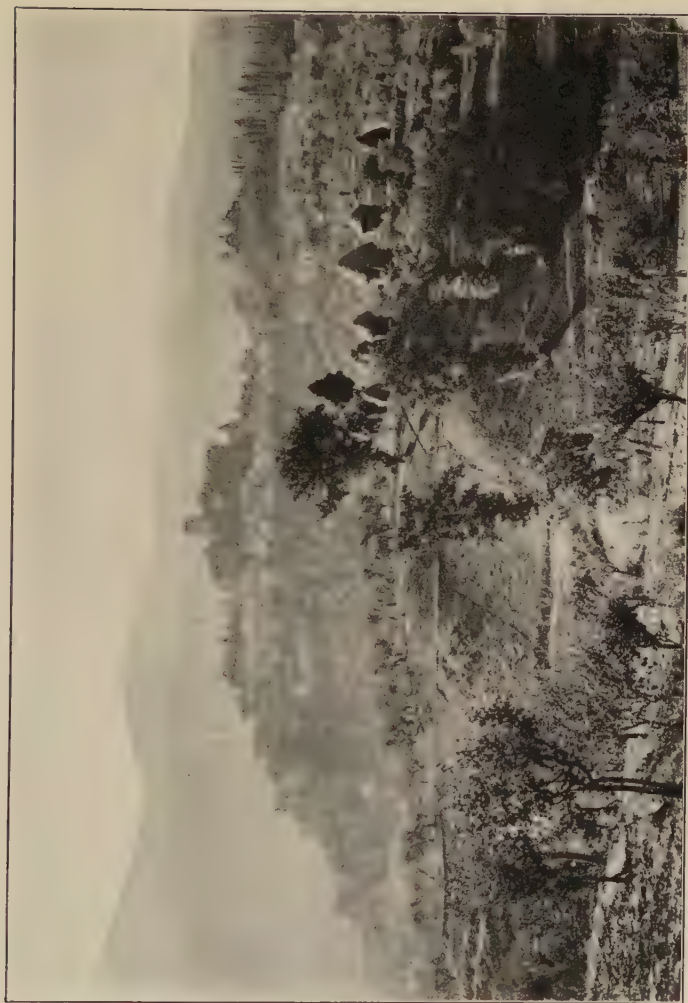
BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

to climb it to the top if you like, passing many rooms on its successive floors, unfurnished but with ceilings flaunting a new and highly varnished Pompeian decoration. There is the ever-beautiful prospect from the roof, after viewing which you hurry down to enjoy the rugged exterior so happily draped with vines and caressed by noble cypresses and pines and where a deeply shadowed flight of steps leads down to a pretty little open-air theatre. The tiers of seats are nearly covered with sod but the pit, the stage, and the prompter's niche are still quite perfect and also the grand private box for the family importantly opening from an upper terrace.

If this beautiful valley beguiles us to prolong the exploration of it, we can continue in the southerly direction and presently come to Le Piazze, a small village above which stands a castle in the clouds, Fighine—who could



CASTLE OF FIGHINE



Cetona.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

have hoped to take it, perched as it is like a hawk on the topmost branch of a tree! The road to it by many a turning is good but exceeding steep, and when the top of the range is reached, there, upon a stony, domed summit, stands the bleak, compact little fortress with towers close-hugging the walls and foundations well spread at the base as though to resist attacks of the elements as well as those of human enemies. Its gateway and machicolations remain nearly perfect, but the walls are cut through in many places to accommodate the modern green-shuttered windows of a habitable villa. Against one side is a small walled garden, showing no evidence of loving care, and beyond is an empty desolate little village of heavily built, low houses, many of them ruinous, others uninhabited, and nowhere is there an effort to soften or beautify, not even among the cottagers, the small attempt of a flower pot on the window sill. At the lowest level in the village is a church which having first been allowed to fall into complete ruin is now being repaired from the foundation up. Fighine looks at the same time harsh and despondent, and this is emphasized by the sight of old women breaking stone on the road close by; and yet with care and sympathy it might so easily take on a very different air.

From its great height the Chiana Valley lies below, drawn like a map, and the summit of Monte Cetona, which we have been approaching so long, is now close by and companionable; but when we have sat on the steep hillside for a while and given our hearts to nature who has done so much here where human beings have done so little, we turn away with a sigh, and, slipping down the western flank of the mountain, take our way toward San Casciano de' Bagni in its sylvan valley and are comforted, for it looks inhabited and by a small cheerful population who enjoy life. The antiquity of the little town is unquestioned, its baths were known to the Romans, and Horace

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

speaks of them. In the Middle Ages it belonged to the wide-spreading realm of the Visconti of Campiglia d'Orcia, but all that is old in the place is put out of countenance by the magnificence of the conspicuously new castle lately erected in the midst of it. No doubt it represents a former historic building, but its high walls, its towers, its battlements, its gorgeously painted coats of arms, its floating banners, try to reproduce the past and yet have such an air of juvenility that the effect is amusingly incongruous. There can be little doubt, however, that the citizens of San Casciano are immensely proud of it. But in a street apart from all this modern grandeur stands the aged Collegiata with its time-stained façade and its fluted columns, some half buried in the wall and supporting nothing. Looking farther you will come to a very beautiful old house having a singular tower and a long loggia with heavy square pillars well worth searching for and seeing.

No, San Casciano is not without attraction, but a greater lies beyond it, for, turning homeward toward Chiusi by a different road from that which brought us, we enter a glade than which there can be nothing more alluring, for the way leads between banks of genista in clumps and patches of the purest gold, partly in the open where the yellow of its massed blossoms is almost dazzling, and, again, sweetly subdued by the flecked shadows of great oaks that in this narrow and sheltered valley reach a size and spread that is truly wonderful. Nowhere have I seen the golden broom in such happy luxuriance.

Half way between Sarteano and Radicofani lies the small, lonely valley before mentioned where Siena fought that bloody battle against her own rebellious subjects in 1262, and perhaps to this day laborers occasionally turn up lance heads and broken spurs in the ploughed furrows that lie so evenly waiting for the autumn rains. Nothing could be more peaceful and pretty in its miniature propor-



Cetona. Castle Tower.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

tions than this little hollow among the hills when I last saw it, for though it was late in the year the dwarf white oaks that softly cover the slopes still held their foliage, turning from green to russet; the pink clover was in bloom, and it was easy to find violets and larkspurs at the edge of the woods. In this setting stands the gray pile of Badia a Spineta, once an important abbey under the protection of a great castle on the heights above it. It was suppressed in the time of Napoleon, but it is still in good preservation and now shelters those who are engaged in cultivating the fertile soil about it for some distant proprietor. Periodical services are held in the church which is spacious and dignified but empty of all the rich accessories it once contained, and it would be the better for the absence of the cheap colored prints that take their place at present.

There is a little triangular cloister with severely straight pillars and a large, bare interior court that one longs to have made as beautiful as such backgrounds can easily be rendered with a little fostering care of plants. At the back the ground drops steeply to the brook in descending terraces, thrifty with the handsome spiked foliage of the artichoke and the succulence of meeker vegetables. Through a gap in the hills behind the abbey the crater fortress of Radicofani outlines itself against the sky.

The climb to the castle of Mojane is a delightful one, the path winding among open woods and grassy hollows, and from the summit of the hill which it crowns it is easy to see how commanding was the site chosen, for it stands thus between the two valleys of the Orcia and the Chiana "the desert and the sown," and so, centuries ago, could keep a wary eye on each. A mighty pile it must have been in its day as the vast space covered by its ruins testifies. Nothing of form is left but one can trace the outer and inner circle of walls, rising in places to a height

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

of ten and fifteen feet—magnificent stone blocks which show that determined destruction, not gradual decay, must have laid it low. It stands on the edge of a precipitous pitch over the ravine where the stream Guecenna flows, and where a road lay that people obliged to travel between Siena and Orvieto had need to take, in the days when travel was not a holiday affair to be lightly and securely undertaken but a matter of moment beset by perils.

It appears that this particular pass was especially dreaded by wayfarers as being a favorite haunt both of gentlemanly outlaws and professional robbers—the former being little more agreeable to meet than the latter, for what was a gentleman temporarily outlawed to do? A living he must have, and the plunder of merchants and other travelers was his resource. Less aristocratic gentry adopted the road as a profession and sometimes became amazingly expert, like a robber Forsyth tells of, who, having religious scruples and desiring to square himself with heaven, stopped a man just below this very castle of Mojane and killed him with his right hand while he held a rosary in his left.

One wanders about the untrodden ground this great castello once covered, through grass and fallen leaves and under oaks that have grown up and spread their branches above its mounded grave. Over there, long ago, a gateway opened, and here under the sod was a rock-flagged court that resounded to the hoofs of horses, the ring of weapons, and the shouts of warriors who went clanging in and out. A whole volume of history and romance lies buried here and how one longs to open it and pore over the yellow pages! One curious legend connected with it survives and is still repeated by the peasants hereabout. It runs as follows:

Long ago when the castle of Mojane was at the height



Badia a Spineta.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

of its grandeur, it was visited by a great personage, no less a one indeed, than a queen, who arrived one day with her court and a numerous escort of armed retainers. A short time after they were all established in the castle, it happened that a feast day of the church occurred. The sovereign concerned herself little with this festival but there were those in her suite who felt the celebration of it should not be neglected and desired to send down to the abbey and fetch a priest. To this there was a refusal from the queen, and it was whispered that on account of her reputation she probably feared the abbot might decline such a request, furthermore the high-handed lady announced that she herself would conduct the service as she had entire authority in such matters.

The arrogance of this assumption startled the whole company, the timid glanced at one another with blanched faces, the reckless smiled, but curiosity took possession of all and they crowded into the chapel.

Having decided to carry the celebration through, the queen proceeded with high ceremony, and with two assistants she arranged the altar and set forth the consecrated vessels. She then took her place before it and began solemnly to intone the service. Those in the congregation held their breath and shook with excitement or terror, but when the moment arrived in which the celebrant was about to lift the sacred chalice on high, lo! a miracle! From it rose the head of a serpent, its jaws extended, its fangs exposed. With frightful rapidity it grew to enormous size and with its coils enveloped the lady and dragged her swiftly through the cowering, shrieking people and out of the chapel door, drowning her screams with its fearful hissing. Through the court yard it passed and out of the portal; the sharp rocks tore her flesh, and every green thing that touched her shrank away and withered.

Straight to the edge of the precipice the serpent bore her

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and flung her body over the edge. Down, down to the bottom it rolled and bounded and her voice was heard no more; but all night long a terrible storm beat upon the castle, and some said they saw demons riding upon the lightning as they came to carry away her soul. Thus was sacrilege justly and awfully punished, and to this day along the channel the serpent made in its passage no plant has ever been known to grow and even the bushes bend away from it.

Wandering many times southward from Siena by the road through Asciano to Pienza and often returning by the same route, certain small towns, far up on the mountains to the east, shone white in the afternoon light, and with the last rays of the sun still more warmly glowed and almost beckoned till I could no longer refrain from climbing the long slopes that lie so peacefully, happily basking in the spring sunshine, and paying a friendly visit to such little places as Montefollonico, Montelifré, Montisi, and Trequanda, such are their musical names. Opposite them is San Giovanni d'Asso. They all lie in the region of the Berardenga that once belonged to the Cacciagontesi, mighty nobles of boundless wealth and wide holdings whose territory extended for miles between Siena, Arezzo, and Trasimeno. Their descent was from that Conte Ranieri who came out of France in 865, sent by the emperor to govern Siena. After the name of his son Berardo the great *contea* came to be called.

By winding ways you approach San Giovanni d'Asso, finally crossing a gorge and arriving opposite the elevation it covers. Here you are confronted by a huge structure of dark red brick, a flat-roofed mass spreading in irregular angles over a great space. There is room within these walls to house a village, but if it is a fortress it is without the characteristics of a castle other than those of solidity and strength. At one point there is a row of five large



San Giovanni d'Asso. Church of San Pietro in Villore.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Gothic windows unrelated to anything else in its architecture, but the pile, with its warm color, is pleasant to the eye, and its meaning is explained when one learns that it was built by Santa Maria della Scala of Siena in the days when anxious souls, about to set out upon the last journey, thought to gain the favor of Heaven by leaving their earthly possessions to the Church. So vast was the wealth of that great hospital and church in the fourteenth century that it required an establishment such as this of San Giovanni d'Asso to administer only one portion of the lands donated by the pious of the region and it remains one of the finest examples still in existence.

Within the *grancia* as it was called there were not only capacious store-rooms but housing for artisans and laborers and proper apartments for the *gastaldo* who superintended all. First providing for use and security, beauty was not omitted, some of the apartments being finished with the elegance of a palazzo. With a position chosen for defence, together with the employment its various activities offered, it was natural that a village should in time grow up beside it and become a walled town, so that to-day San Giovanni is as closely built and as populous as other places in its neighborhood. In the small parish church there are a number of panels of the Sienese school, but perhaps the most attractive feature in the village is the little half-ruined chapel of San Pietro in Villore, standing quite detached with a background of fields and hills, while, to soften its decay, a friendly olive tree has disposed its bent trunk and gnarled branches before the broken façade in caressing curves, and drawn across it a delicate curtain of leafy growth to complete the picture it makes.

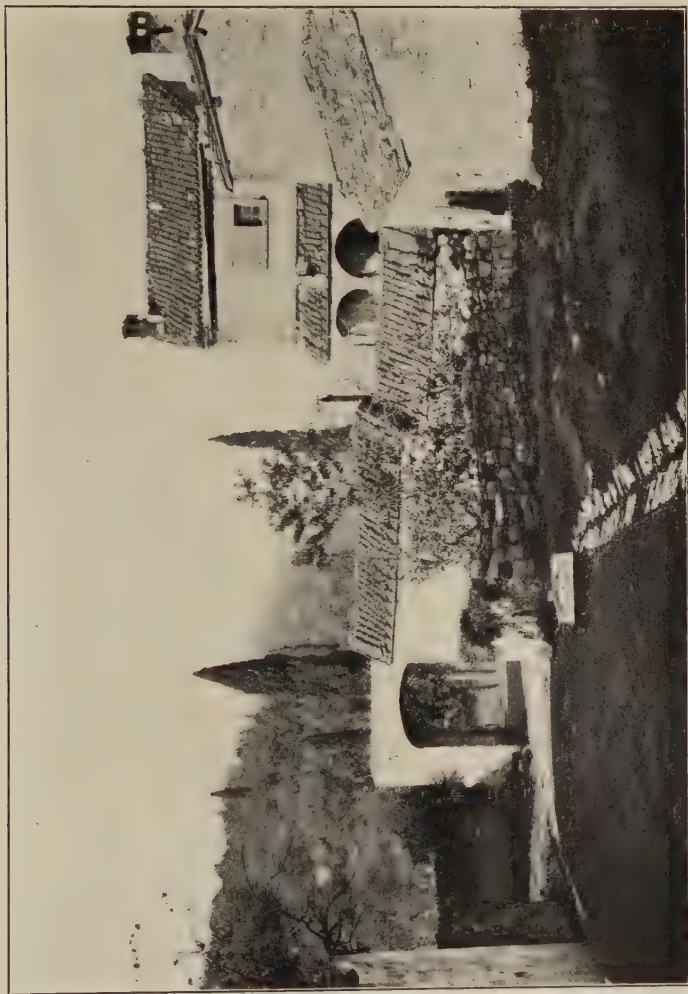
Highest of the villages we are visiting lies Montefollonico surmounting the rocky eminence from which she can command the Chiana basin as well as overlook the valley of the Orcia. Every turn of the ascending road reveals

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

new and beautiful views of the country mapped below, and orchards and gardens have grown up outside Montefollonico's walls and smile at her threatening defences. She is as old as the Romans, as old as the Etruscans, and in her mediæval period was girdled with double walls, one line of which is quite complete, together with her three massive gates, the western one especially pictorial. As she stands there she represents the perfect type of Tuscan military art in the Middle Ages, porte and anteporte, sentinel tower and all, and now the noise of battle and siege is long past; everything warlike has departed and peaceful shepherds and tillers of the soil inhabit the little gray houses on the scantily populated streets. There is a simple and beautiful *pieve* and the church of San Sigismondo possesses one of Neroccio's exquisite madonnas. I blush to confess that the domestic quarters of the absent priest underwent a most unseemly rummaging on my account by an assiduous peasant who in spite of remonstrance insisted on obliging me by a search for concealed canvases. He did produce from certain crannies and cupboards one or two small pictures which had the merit of apparent antiquity but no other.

Strangers seldom call at Montefollonico, yet their appearance evokes no ill-mannered curiosity; on the contrary, a pleasant friendliness, and the air of the place is that of a pastoral people accidentally lodged in the scene of a martial past whose resounding echoes died centuries ago. It is hard to convey the charm of it, but it is there to reward the wanderer who cares for its beauty and its memories.

From Montefollonico it is not far to Montisi, lying in a garden-like nest among the hilltops, surrounded by silvery olives here and there broken by the dark column of a cypress. Montisi may be small but it is entered between big, dignified buildings, a pillared loggia on the left, a



Montefollonico.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

stately entrance to the castle court on the right, with a glimpse of an arched façade, and, still farther, a high but much restored tower. Beyond these it climbs a little hill and has its own view of all the loveliness of the surrounding mountains and valleys.

Like the other towns among these hills it has its roots in a profound antiquity, for all this ground is sown with relics of ancient Etruria. In later times it belonged, as we have said, to that branch of the fierce Berardenga stock that bore such warlike names as Cacciaconti, Cacciaguerra, Spadalunga, Spadacorta, etc.

These families virtually ruled supreme in their various castles in different parts of the neighboring hills, holding that they owed allegiance to no man save the distant emperor, while Siena, still a bishopric, was striving toward liberty and the communal form of government, and claiming authority over the territory they occupied. This claim the Cacciaconti, who had "encastled her borders," vigorously denied. They represented her greatest danger and the principal obstacle to bringing the country under her control and against them the citizens of Siena early directed their efforts. In 1168 they took counsel together and decided to attack Asciano as being the nearest and most threatening of the Cacciaconti strongholds. After a brief resistance Ildibrandino, the head of the family, was obliged to capitulate and it must have been with a bad grace that he perforce announced publicly that he and his wife Gisla, willingly, for their own honor and for love of Siena, gave their town of Asciano to that city, and agreed to do homage for the same thereafter.

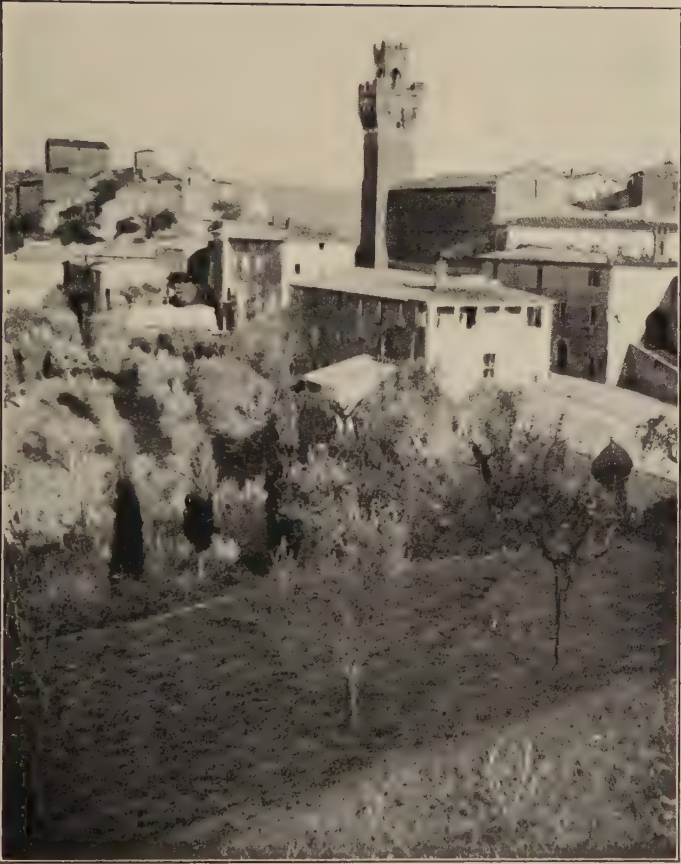
Ildibrandino's subsequent conduct, according to the ancient archives, showed him "little sincere toward the republic," for no sooner had he feigned submission than he began secretly to plot with Siena's enemy, the Bishop of Arezzo, for support in throwing off the allegiance he had

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

just sworn, and Siena was too busy to take active measures against him, being again at war with Florence. There were battles also between the Pope and the Emperor, and thus several disturbed years passed, there being added to wars and rumors of wars, signs and portents of a character to terrify the stoutest heart. For example, as Fra Antonino writes, "the year 1195 was a prodigious one for there were fearsome tempests of the air, thunder, rain, and lightning of the most horrible the memory of man records. With all this there fell from heaven hailstones as large as eggs, that tore and broke down trees and vines and even sorely harmed men. Also ravens and other great birds were seen flying about with lighted coals in their beaks, scattering them abroad and sowing them upon the roofs of houses."

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, in the following year the Sieneese felt themselves strong enough to attack the rebellious Cacciagonti again, and they decided this time to assemble an army sufficiently strong to punish them and compel obedience. This force was to be placed under a valorous captain and provided with abundant food, machines for battering down walls, and all the other mighty engines of war that the twelfth century knew.

When news of these ominous preparations reached the ears of the Cacciagonti they had a hasty family conference and agreed that they had not men enough to stand against Siena, and therefore it was better to come to terms than to fight with the certainty of being overcome. To do homage to Siena for their holdings—to humble themselves before the base rabble of a town—was an intolerable humiliation, yet for the moment there was no other way, and Siena was sure to be in trouble with her various enemies before long, and oaths were things that could be broken. They sent word that if safe conduct was assured them they would present themselves in that city forth-



Montisi.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

with, and this was promptly given. So the Cacciaconti lords came down from their respective eagles' nests, black and scowling, we may be sure, and traveled to Siena, Ildibrandino, Bernardo, Rinaldo, Tancredi, Ranieri, and there in open assembly at the church of San Pellegrino, before the consuls of the people, they took the oath of fidelity to the republic for themselves and their heirs forever, with the promise to live in Siena for three months of the year and to pay a tribute of five hundred *lire*. For Montisi in particular they were to offer a wax candle of six pounds' weight every summer on the festival of Santa Maria d'Agosto.

It was a very solemn and binding ceremony but it did not eternally cement the relations between Siena and her newly sworn subjects. The Cacciaconti went their way and rebelled as often as ever. Whenever they could safely do so they threw off allegiance and refused tribute and they got the protection of the Emperor Otto IV (which, however, was more documentary than actual) as an aid in defying Siena. At last, in 1213, they were forced to submit again and to renew their vows, the Lord of Montisi binding himself separately and specially to protect the men of Siena wherever he encountered them, and not to oppress them with road tolls and other grievous demands.

After this the unruly Cacciaconti gradually reconciled themselves to their fate and in time became good citizens of the city they had so long resisted. One Ildibrandino of Montisi even became a *podestà*, and is praised for his admirable persuasive arguments in favor of peaceful negotiation and submission to rightful authority, whereby he quelled disturbances at home and established peace abroad. Another of the family, quite different in character, is referred to by Dante as belonging to that joyous crew called the Brigata Godereccia, a band of twelve youths of wealthy families who agreed to combine their

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

fortunes and dwelt together in a magnificent palace in Siena, merrymaking and carousing night and day. They gave glorious feasts and threw the gold and silver vessels out of the windows afterward. No doubt this particular Cacciagonte ruffled it with the best, for we are told all his broad vineyards and woodlands passed out of his hands. Before the end of a year the spendthrift youths were penniless and the Brigata broke up.

In the Guelph and Ghibelline battles of those days Montisi suffered greatly, being taken and retaken by the warring parties, but by the end of the thirteenth century the town came into the possession of the Spedale della Scala of Siena, through the testament of one Simone Cacciagonte, who dying at the age of twenty-nine, after a short but agitated career, left his estate to that great hospital. The fortifications were now repaired, and a new castle built, though not upon the site of the old one, and Pecci enthusiastically describes it as "a splendid fortress after the fashion of a palace, with towers, gates, and draw-bridge, arcaded within and having a beautiful bricked cistern; a moat also and everything to be desired to render it unconquerable. And, furthermore, it contains chambers and vaults for grain, wine, and other stores." This is the building we see to-day.

In the parish church there is an altarpiece by Neroccio, the Madonna and Child with four saints, a very beautiful work though sadly injured by long neglect. It would be repayment for a long journey if one needed any compensation but the joys to be had by the way.



MONTEMERANO

CHAPTER XIV

MONTELIFRÈ—TREQUANDA—MANCIANO—
MONTEMERANO —SATURNIA—SOVANA



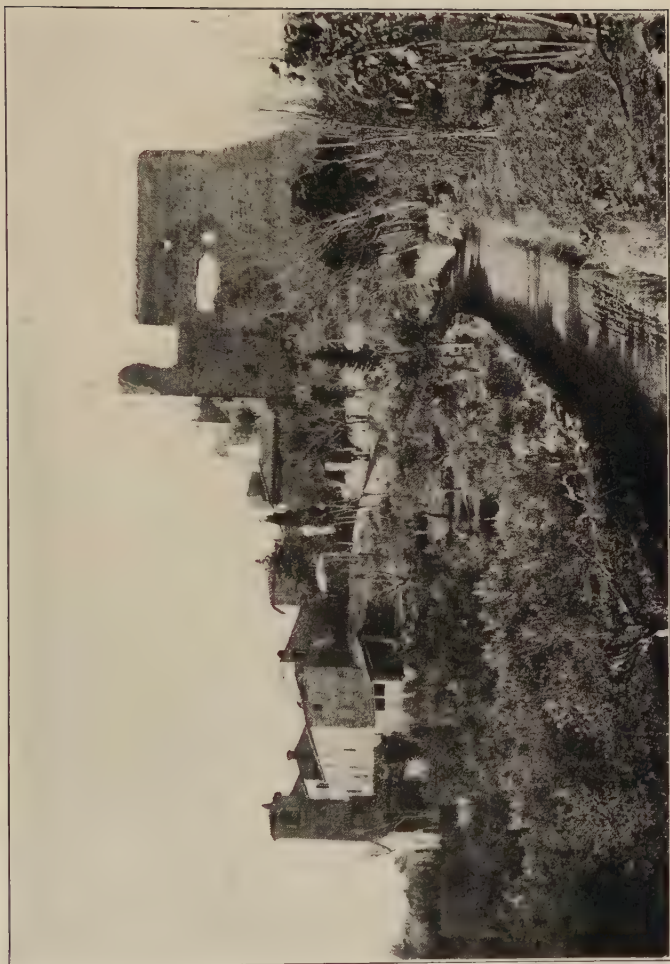
ROUNDING the spur of a hill a few minutes after leaving Montisi a little castle comes unexpectedly into view, or rather hardly more than the meagre fragment of a castle to which is attached what is left of a villa. It is Montelibrè, a small trecento fortress destroyed by the Medici artillery when Cosimo took it. It is a harsh ruin very unlike those that underwent a more gradual change and dissolution. Huge rents are torn in the high flat wall that confronts you as you approach, and beyond lie heaps of fallen stone, while still farther a stark tower rears itself against the sky. Nowhere has a vine or shrub taken root, no softening bit of verdure lends a cloak to cover its nakedness. Montelibrè might have met its fate within a few years

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

instead of a few hundred for all that nature has done to soften its decay. Who can guess what legitimate bombardments the brave little place had withstood before that last unfair surprise, what salutes of burning pitch, what attacks of arbalist and mangonel, what onslaughts of a score of fierce warriors at once, from the top of a little turret on wheels trundled against the walls; and then, having resisted so long, to perish all at once amid nothing less than the thunder and lightning of the skies harnessed in gunpowder and directed by the hand of man!

As early as the beginning of the fourteenth century it was the property of the Martinozzi, a family of ancient and honorable mention in Sienese history, and to that name it still belongs together with the cultivated slopes that surround it. In the roots of the castle on the steep eastward side much space has been rescued, and pleasant suites of rooms exist there which are used by the family. Two or three portraits upon those walls gaze down out of the past to awaken curiosity and interest, especially that of a certain Isabella who looks a spoiled beauty and about whom a shadowy story lurks that refuses to come into the light.

Leaving Montelifrè it is but three miles to Trequanda, another one of the little neighborhood of towns upon these hills. From a distance its outline describes an oval against the slope it lies upon and it looks a very centre of thrifty cultivation among haycocks, fruit trees, and dotted farmhouses. On a nearer approach it is to be seen that the ground it covers is not low but rises to a proper elevation for the foundation of its great brooding castle which rests there, long and level but for the big round tower, and that, too, has been reduced and flattened. Passing through the gate the small piazza is close by and the castle court gives upon it. When I visited it I was at once taken in charge by four of its kindly citizens and one of them, the



Montelifrè.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Cavaliere C., offered with true Tuscan hospitality to show me his garden, his apartments in the castle, and his "*bella vista*." There was a well in his courtyard and the greenery of vines and potted plants gave a pretty habitable touch. The interior of the building has been entirely tamed to domestic uses, and the eager throwing open of shutters displayed many rooms, all furnished and decorated in the modern manner but all unused. I do not know where in the unlimited spaces of such a building the cavaliere's bachelor quarters may have been hidden, for I was shown only the portions that were a matter of pride with him, the bare, uninhabited air of which it was impossible to grow enthusiastic over; but no effort was needed to praise the lovely prospect from his windows or the pleasant shade of his garden where I was pressed to accept a little refreshment, after which we visited the pretty Romanesque church of San Pietro on the opposite side of the piazza. Its façade is built of square blocks of gray stone and white disposed in chequered design; it has well-worn stone benches on either hand of the portal, an exterior staircase, and a graceful bell tower. Inside there is a polyptich by Giovanni di Paolo and an interesting fresco said to be by Bartolommeo da Miragna, in which the Virgin is attended by various holy men and women, among them Saint Catherine in a wondrously flowered robe.

Upon the high altar is the sarcophagus of Beata Bonizella, very splendid with carving and ornament. My kind hosts were surprised and a little shocked at my ignorance concerning this saint, so beloved and revered in that countryside, and I learned the legend of her life, so child-like in its simplicity and sweetness that I tell it here. She was of the many-branched and many-castled family of the Cacciaconti and it is said that in the burning of the archives of Arezzo in the fourteenth century there perished

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

precious records of her, but treasured stories of her goodness and her sanctity were handed down through generations of those who in these remote hills cherished her memory, and to this day her festival is kept in Trequanda on the third Sunday in May, and many a little girl of the region is called Beata for the blessing of the name. After the death of her husband Naddo Piccolomini she gave herself to a religious life, seeking the favor of God in the deepest humility and the most devoted piety, as well as the exercise of severest penances, until her death, which took place in 1300. But the rigor which she applied to herself she by no means used in her dealings with others, to whom she was tenderly indulgent. Her sympathy was ever ready, she gave herself and her riches to the needy, nursing the sick, causing beggars to bless her, and especially providing for all nuns whom she found in poverty; thus did she exchange those earthly possessions which she had inherited, but without thought of herself, into celestial treasure.

When with the tears of the humble she was laid to sleep in the little church of Trequanda, three panels of marble closed the niche where her body waited for the resurrection. So it remained for a time, but God was not contented that such a devoted servant of his should lie thus meekly, and the place of her rest be in time forgotten, and therefore, in His wisdom, He made use of a swarm of bees to make His purpose known. The stones that closed the sepulchre of Beata Bonizella had not been well fitted or else with time had become loosened, and one day the people were surprised to see that bees were swarming over the marble panels and clustering in the crevices. They said to one another that behind those panels there must be honey and they decided to loosen them to make sure. When they had done this they marveled indeed, for there lay the body of Beata Bonizella beautiful and un-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

corrupted as in life, while in those hands which had once carried gifts so lovingly and freely to the suffering of earth rested a comb of purest honey, placed there by the bees which now circled about the church but harmed no one.

Beside Beata Bonizella lay the body of a little child, Guido, an infant nephew, who had been dear to her in life and who, dying, had been buried with her. It seemed that in death he had partaken of the holiness that pervaded the saintly woman and like her he lay there fair and uncorrupted. The people gazed for a while speechless upon the lovely vision before them and all the village came to marvel and to pray. Then they caused to be made a fitting sarcophagus for their blessed Bonizella and from that time they invoked her in every trouble of mind or distress of body, and many received solace of spirit and cure of flesh, as the votive offerings about the casket show to this day.

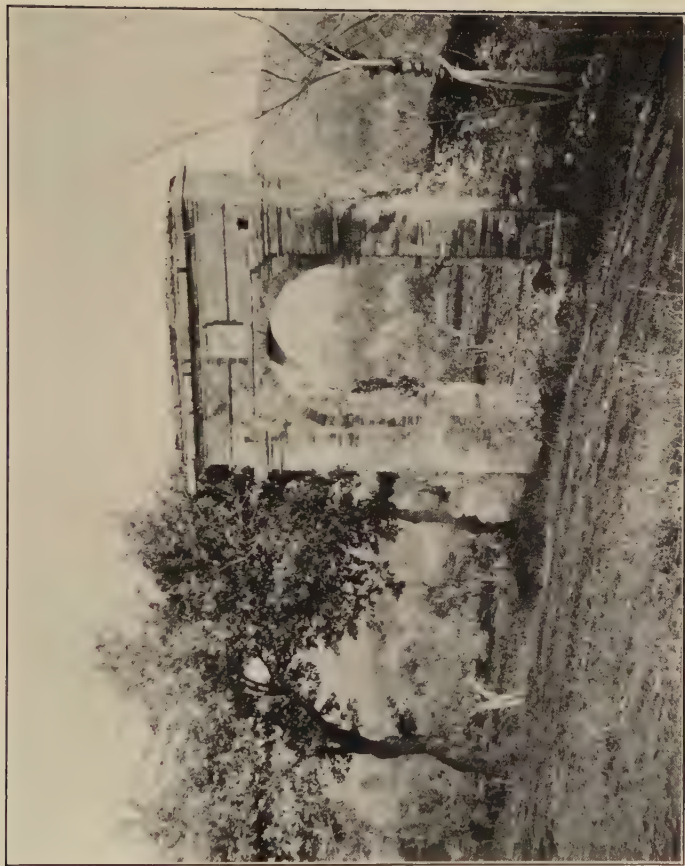
Once only did one unworthy approach this sacred spot. There came a time when the land was cursed by war. Armed hordes trampled the fields of Trequanda and one day a band of turbulent soldiers entered the church. Seeing the beauty of the cherished coffin and ignorant of whom it contained they chose to open it. But when their eyes rested upon the loveliness therein enshrined their hearts were melted within them, and making the sign of the cross they began to pray as others had done before them. All but one and he, with a heart hardened by the love of gold, looked with envy upon a costly ring that rested upon the finger of Beata Bonizella. He looked, and presently he stretched forth a profane hand and roughly drew the ring from the finger it had never left before. In that same moment he was stricken with blindness. Horror at what he had done overcame him, deeply he repented his sin and trembling he groped for the sacred hand he had robbed, and finding it replaced the jewel he

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

had stolen. With that act the sight he had lost was restored to him, and falling upon his knees he wept and implored forgiveness for his impiety.

In the hill country near the southern boundary of Tuscany lies a neighborhood of towns unusually individual and picturesque, and one day in May I journeyed toward them from Orbetello. Two or three hours by motor through a pretty wooded country brings one, if inclined to loiter a bit by the way, to Manciano where it is easy to lunch. Manciano is not one of the places above referred to for, though clean and prosperous in appearance, it is only beautiful from a distance, being well placed on an isolated hill which has been leveled at the top to receive its high-shouldered, square castle, quite unimposing in form and tastelessly "restored." Not an opening anywhere in those walls is left as it once was, the characteristic arch form is blotted out, every window is uncompromisingly spaced and squared, and as for the battlements which at present boast of their newness, they must surely differ sadly from what they replace. The building stands upon an unfrequented piazza containing a big, ungraceful fountain and is undeniably disappointing; but having thus disparaged the crown of Manciano, I must not fail to admit that the climb to it, by way of its steep, narrow streets lined with dark brown houses, is amply repayed by the great prospect that is spread out below it of endless wooded ravines and hill ridges and the distant sparkle of the sea.

Once it was possible to see from here the towers of castles with famous names such as Scerpenna, Pelagone, and, most renowned of all, directly to the south, Montauto—the centre of endless struggles not only among families and communes but between nations, for the Spanish and the Saracens fought fiercely over the possession of it. Many times it was razed to the ground and many times



Montelifrè. A Gateway.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

rebuilt, but now it lies a heap of ruins and the woods are closing in upon it as the memory of its greatness fades away.

So, not remaining many hours in Manciano, I betook myself to the road again and after a few miles came in sight of Montemerano, rising from sea-green waves of olive foliage that a frolic wind was tossing into spray of silver.

The town has a sweet peaceable air as though it retained the heavy tower that forms its apex more as a decoration or a memorial than as a threat, having reached a sunny and unembittered old age, and this because it has known, like the best and finest tempered human beings, a life full of experience, of light and dark, of sun and storm. The Etruscan mystery, the Roman rigor, the mediæval turmoil, it knew them all, down to the time when Piccinino besieged and took it and was promptly driven out by Siena, who in turn was broken by the Medici. And now it rests upon its gentle hill and smiles at the traveler. At least this is the impression it gives as one approaches it in the happy sunlight of an afternoon in spring. When you have entered it, it may be like other little hill villages, but pass on till you stop before one dwelling having an ancient inscription which reads as follows:

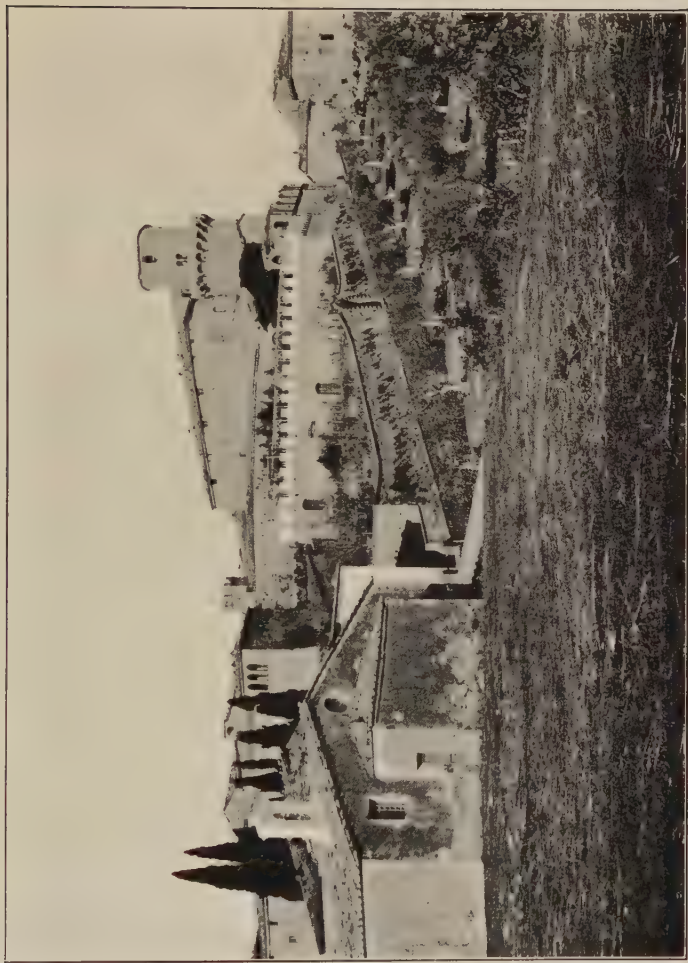
"This is the house of the Alfieri Fausto Grassi and his friends." There surely was a genial soul whose hospitality was wide. Let us hope he lived long and died peacefully as he deserved and as not too many lived and died in those days, and that with his good friends he represented the spirit of the town.

The main street now opens out into an irregular little piazza on one side of which a row of arches stretches across to a building once the Church of the Assumption but changed by profane hands into a theatre, leaving as testimony of the transformation a tiny *campanile* perched upon

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

a corner of the roof. But Montemerano does not lack a church. It is dedicated to San Giorgio and externally nothing could be more severe than its flattened gable, its two square windows, and its unornamented wooden door; very small it is, too, but it holds treasures. Once its walls bloomed with frescoes, since dishonored by a coat of limewash that here and there has dropped away and shows a bit of its earlier beauty. The haloed head of a saint emerges, Tobias and his angelic protector can be traced, and the Virgin and Child adored by one of those who brought gifts. A prelate consecrated to the service of that little sanctuary did once assert that the worshippers gazed too much at the pictured walls and so ordered them covered to the good of his parishioners' souls. But however verifiable that may be, the frescoes are less important than the fine polyptich by Sano di Pietro, a treasure that one rejoices to find still existing in the place for which it was painted. Besides this there are other pictures, though these have been barbarously repainted, and a lovely ciborium, carved, gilded, and painted with saints and angels, together with vestments of rich old embroidery greatly cherished and shown with pride. But of all San Giorgio possesses, that which most evokes wonder and speculation is a panel which now leans against the wall in a corner of the sacristy. One recognizes that it is the half of an Annunciation, the sweet, girlish figure of the Madonna, but without the angel, and it is evident that the panel has been used as a door. Time has gnawed away parts of it, the grooves of strap hinges are there, but, most curious of all, about a foot above the floor a round hole has been sawed out. Shall we listen to Signor Nicolosi's delightful story concerning it?

"Once upon a time there lived a parish priest and a cat. The priest was devoted to economy and the cat to mice. The two therefore lived together in the greatest harmony,



Trequanda.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

each following his own inclination without in the least disturbing the other; indeed the cat's fondness for the chase spared the good priest in the matter of food and this pleased him greatly. One day it happened that the storeroom door fairly dropped in pieces, it was so very old. It was a sad blow, for this important door protected precious things. In the storeroom were kept the ripening fruit, the seasoning cheese, and the good yellow meal for wholesome bread. Besides it was a door sacred to but two beings in the world, the priest and his companion the cat. The cat was admitted through a round hole cut on purpose, and this for the best of reasons, since by means of his nightly prowling the stores were kept from harm. So the loss of the door was a serious matter, for money would be needed to replace it. But then what was one to do? The storeroom could not be left open to all the world. The priest considered for some time and at last hit upon a happy idea. In the sacristy there was a fine old panel, so old that by this time it must be admirably seasoned. To be sure there was a very beautiful Madonna painted upon it, but what then? It would make the door all the more attractive. Once already the panel had served the purpose of a door, the door of a sacred tabernacle instead of a pantry. But, after all, whose fault was it that the tabernacle had disappeared and that the picture happened to be that of the Madonna? And why, now that her sacred function no longer required her, should she not be serving him, a needy priest? So the panel was sawed, fitted, and nailed into a solid door, not forgetting to pierce in it a commodious hole for the faithful cat.

"And this is why the slender Madonna with her shy expression and timid gesture finds herself far from the angel who was announcing to her the great event. For the panel now leans against the wall in a corner of the sacristy, returned to it by a parish priest less practical

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

than his predecessor, and the meek Madonna seems to wait in her humility and resignation with the hope that she may sometime be called to a better fate."

It is but a short distance from Montemerano to Saturnia, ancient Etruscan city of august name and memory. It is built upon a gently rising, tabled hill, and its great enclosure of walls, constructed of yellow travertine but lowered now in height and adorned with ivy and sturdy shrubs, holds the town, or rather the site of it, as in a shallow cup. From a distance only the stump of a tower shows above the encircling ramparts, one might be approaching the empty shell of what was once a populous town. Saturnia has no narrow streets, no tall crowded houses, no remains of architectural beauty. Its few scattered dwellings and its wide empty piazza are all open to the wind and sunshine. Between this poor fragment of what once existed and the city wall lie acres of grain, of grass, and of blank, stony ground. At the entrance a tract of wall shows those gigantic blocks fitted without mortar, that remain to us from the Etruscan builders.

In the procession of the centuries the place has come near to annihilation so many times that it is a matter for wonder any vestige of it remains to mark the spot. After its Etruscan period the Romans colonized it, and later themselves devastated it during the wars of Marius and Sulla (88 B. C.). The Saracens in turn destroyed it, it suffered at the hands of the Longobards, yet it raised its head again, as part of the Aldobrandeschi *contea*, till in 1299 Siena sacked and burned it, after some particular outrage perpetrated by the people of Margherita Aldobrandeschi who for a time made it her residence. After this, for some thirty years its ruins sheltered a den of brigands, till finding this insupportable the republic decided to send a force and drive out the assassins. The castle was then repaired and the walls rebuilt. After



The Madonna of Montemerano.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

that effort history has little to say of it as it suffered the decline of all the rest of the fever-stricken Maremma.

Wandering over the fields among flowers and wild shrubs to trace the extent of the walls one finds the circle nearly complete, and discovers on the side toward the river certain scarped rocks that added strength to the fortifications. Beyond the walls is a thin cultivation and in the valley below, clouds of white steam show the presence of sulphur springs. The few inhabitants of the town are mostly shepherds and herders, and by reason of this, once in the year, on the sixth of May, Saturnia awakens and finds itself still populous, for then the great branding day arrives and the bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle resound through the valley as they wind along the roads and collect within its boundaries. Wild is the mirth, daring feats are performed, and the day finishes with a rather boisterous festa and profuse libations. Who knows but those black-haired, wandering Pelasgi, the phantom race that antedated the Etruscans, look down and smile approval of this pastoral revel?

In the confines of the castle there is a garden with a locked gate. Many terra-cotta jars are preserved here that have been disinterred on the spot, and of Roman remains there are two pedestals of marble with long Latin inscriptions, besides many lesser discoveries, capitals of columns, marble slabs, and the like. It has been the custom to incorporate such things in humble houses built nearest the place where they were unearthed. One inhabitant showed me a panel bearing heads in high relief. He remembered as a child seeing it exhumed and built into the wall of the house where it now is. Hardly a man of the little group who accompanied us to inspect the sights but had a few antique coins in his pocket which he offered us as a gift or for sale.

In the small parish church from whose exterior the pink

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

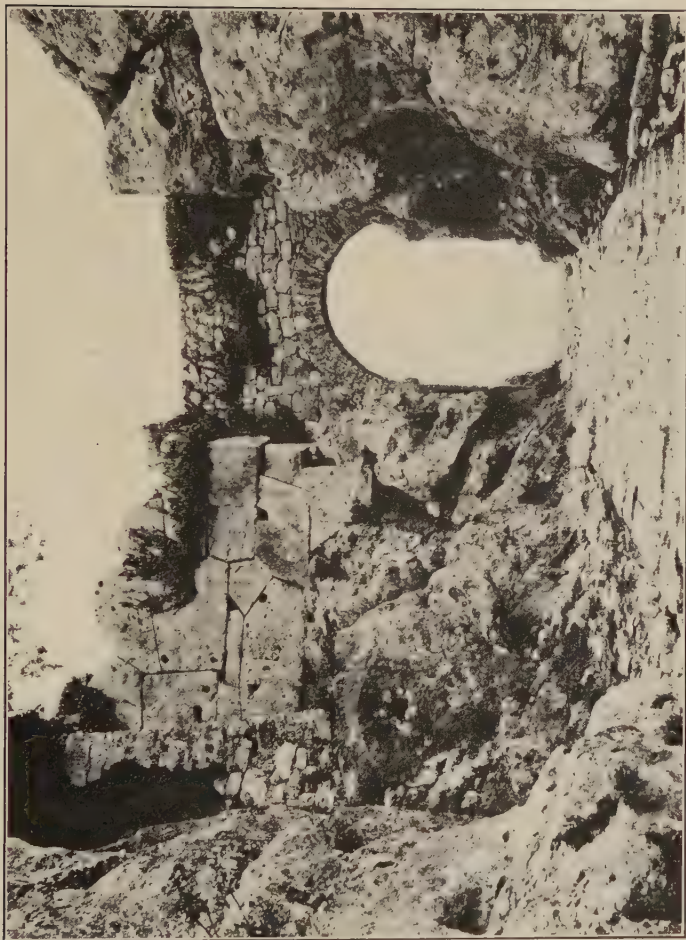
plaster is dropping away, is a sweet, endearing picture, unspoiled by repainting, and shining in the dim light of the little sanctuary like a gentle star. The young Madonna holds the Holy Child upon her knee, the most charming of babies, with wonderfully curled golden hair and a little hand upraised in blessing. Upon one side the Magdalen with innocent, girlish face lifts with one finger the lid of the ointment box, and upon the other stands Saint Sebastian; not this time is he the beautiful youth, but, black-haired and with a deeply lined face, he is lost in a sacred reverie and entirely oblivious of the fifteen arrows with which he is pierced. Girolamo di Benevento is said to have painted this altarpiece for the place it occupies and one can but mourn at its present desecration, for mother and child wear elaborate silver crowns and bead necklaces ruthlessly fastened to the face of the picture.

It was late when I left Saturnia, gray twilight was settling over the ancient site and over the broad valley sown with the tombs of a forgotten people. Passing slowly along a low parapet I saw an old man still digging unsteadily among the clods in the bit of ground he was cultivating. Presently this remark floated over the wall; I say floated because it was neither loud nor insistent but was simply exhaled as the ruminations of the moment found expression: "I *should* like to smoke half a cigar this evening!" I stopped short and addressed the Sieneese, my companion.

"This time you must let me give something. That was not begging, it was just a remark overheard. Now how much may I give?"

He smiled ironically as one understanding sophistry. "You may give him just two cents. That will get him half a cigar."

The Sieneese is jealous lest the independence of the Tuscan



Saturnia. Etruscan Gateway.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

peasant be undermined. I called to the old man and he came to the wall, with just a touch of quizzical self-consciousness. The two cents was deposited in his hand and the beaming smile with which it was received ought to have melted the disciplinary heart of the Sieneese.

The only road to Sovana, the ancient Suana, leads north from Pitigliano over lonely hills and stony table-lands for some four miles. The condition of it tells one long before arriving what degree of poverty and abandonment must exist there. One takes a motor at the risk of ruin, a carriage driven at a walk progresses painfully, so that the wiser choice is to make the journey on foot or by means of a horse. From the summit of the last hill you look down upon the town and while gradually descending and observing its position, marvel that Sovana so small and so poorly placed for resistance should have been able to defend itself with such obstinacy.

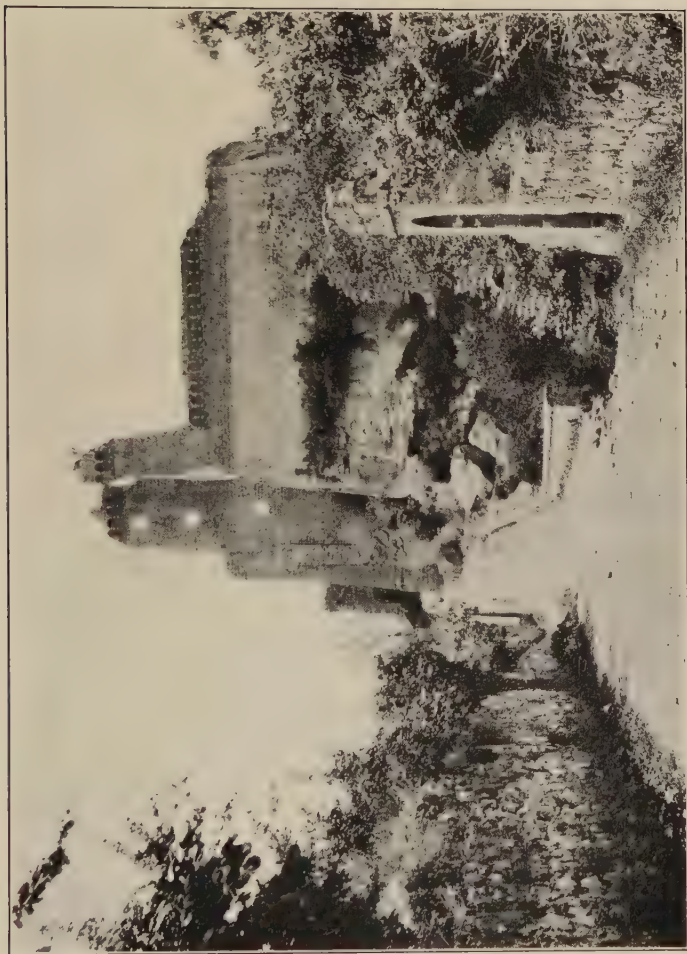
Two brooks in their hollowed beds enclose it and a little bridge leads to the city gate. Above this the riven tower of the castle lifts itself, and the town walls continuing from it rise now and again to their original height. Entering the archway—for the gate and portcullis are missing—one stands in “the city of Jeremiah,” as Repetti calls it, a sad, ruinous little place, picturesque and not unclean but silent and almost empty. Strange vicissitudes, incredible contrasts has it seen in its day, and withal, it has never been absolutely abandoned. Pliny mentions it. By turns it was Etruscan, Roman, Longobard, Carlovingian. It dared a brave but losing battle against the fierce Longobards, it defied the might of Frederic II, it was the cradle of the great Aldobrandeschi family.

Half a century ago it reached its low water mark; it is said that at that time there were but sixty souls left alive in Sovana. The main thoroughfare, encumbered with earth and débris, grew up to nettles and the inhabitants,

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

poisoned by malaria, despairing and apathetic, hardly attempted to till the fields. To-day the place is slowly reviving. Malaria is controlled, the streets are cleared of nettles, and the inhabitants, numbering about one hundred and seventy, work as best they can; yet it is hard to imagine that its decay was ever more evident than now. It was high noon as we stood in the gateway, yet no one was in sight excepting a girl who halted staring, while the goat she tended nibbled at the grass drooping from the wall of a roofless palace. As we proceeded two or three women emerged from their houses and one spoke to an old man sitting upon a doorstep. So purblind was he that he was but half conscious of anything but the warmth of the sun, a shaft of which he feebly sought to follow as it shifted. In a doorway a little girl nursed upon her knee a doll. Was there then a doll in Sovana? It was a brick with a strip of red cotton tied about it. The child smiled contentedly, yet her pitiful toy seemed a symbol of the poverty about her.

Extending from the castle gate to the piazza, the street is paved with warm red brick laid in herring-bone pattern, here and there sunken and uneven but quite complete. Upon the piazza itself it is elaborately paneled and the design spreads in two indicated pathways, the left leading to the small Street of the Hebrews, which grazes the outer wall, while the right, somewhat choked after a while with brambles, conducts one to the cathedral. Upon the piazza face the Communal Palace, that of the *podestà*, two small churches, and the prison. Everything that once embellished the fronts of these buildings—mouldings, torch sockets, projections of every kind—has been stripped away and the arched doors and windows filled in. Upon the façade of the Palace of the Podestà one opening only has been left and that is wide to wind and weather; but certain of the ancient coats of arms still cling to the wall



Sovana Castle (Suana).

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and the stump of a column protrudes obliquely from a rough restoration at the base of the building.

The tenth century cathedral, whose architecture indicates the progress from Longobard to Gothic, stands upon what must once have been a piazza of its own; the last building within the walls, but turns its back squarely upon Sovana in order to orient itself correctly. It has become a curious huddle of walls. From its low roof a tower rises a few feet, beginning as a rectangle and devel-



SOVANA. PORTAL OF THE CATHEDRAL

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

oping into an octagon. The exterior of the apse with its Gothic window has disappeared behind an addition used as a sacristy. The façade has been destroyed and the main portal is upon the left side of the building. This displays a captivating collection of fragments assembled with no regard to relationship. On either side, at the base of the pilasters, is carved a doughty warrior riding a steed so abridged as to his back that there is barely room for the saddle.

Within, the church is spacious, but dirty and neglected, the walls thickly coated with limewash which has dropped away here and there and shows the tufa construction underneath. The clustered pillars bear capitals in great variety of design, some foliated, some with Roman ox-heads, others with primitive symbolic combinations of men and animals; in one Adam and Eve grotesquely figure. Saint Mamiliano is honored here by a fourteenth century monument. His effigy upon the lid of his sarcophagus is painfully flattened as though to meet the exigencies of a too contracted niche, but his folded hands are adorned with many rings. Tradition tells us that this saint fleeing from the persecution of Aurelian in the fourth century stopped in his travels to convert Sovana.

But far more conspicuous than the monument of Saint Mamiliano is a modern inscription upon the right wall which urges the beholder to remember, that

In Etruscan Sovana
was born
the great Hildebrand
Saint Gregory VII.

Thus does Sovana claim the powerful Pope whom the profane have nicknamed Saint Satan.

But more interesting than the cathedral is the little church of Santa Maria, which stands upon the central piazza opposite the Palace of the Podestà. It is easily

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

overlooked for its bare walls are without ecclesiastical features, and if it ever possessed any embellishments, nothing is now left but its small *campanile a vela* planted like a chimney in the centre of the roof. The attraction of Santa Maria is within, for it holds the only fragments of fresco remaining in Sovana, as well as an unusual and interesting altar, where the simplest of rectangular stone tables is so placed that the officiating priest faces his congregation, while over it is a baldachino richly carved. This altar has been treated with an offensive coat of parti-colored paint, but it does not quite blot out the intricate braided designs with which the surface is covered.

Sunk in the wall on either side of the entrance are arched niches lined with frescoes of the Sienese school, sadly injured by repainting, but charming still. In one, the Madonna adoring the Child upon her knees is attended by Saint Barbara and Saint Lucy; and upon the concave of the opening are Saint Mamiliano and Saint Sebastian. The other niche frames a crucifixion between Saint Anthony and Saint Lawrence; and upon the concave, Saint Roch and Saint Sebastian—the latter represented as a pretty golden-haired boy; and though partly obliterated, still lovely in color and graceful in attitude. Saint Roch is in cloak, and tunic of green and rose, the only time I remember to have seen him portrayed as a beautiful youth instead of a care-worn man. Upon the step of the Madonna's throne is the date:

A. D. N. CCCCVIII di XX diceb.

and below the inscription:—

queste figure affatte fare Giovanni de Valentino P. suo patre.

Under the other fresco is inscribed:—

queste figure a fatte fare Giovanni di Pietro

followed by the date 1517, and another line which is illegible.

High upon the right wall of the church is a partly effaced

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

fresco, representing the seated figure of a woman, of heroic size, supporting a great crucifix which she holds nearly upright, resting it upon the ground beside her. The face of the figure is not distinguishable but the body and draped head suggest the Madonna.

If we turn to the mediæval history of Sovana we find it obscure by reason of the scarcity of early records. The unhappy town so frequently suffered siege and sack that there was more than common destruction of public documents. We know that as a bishopric it existed before the sixth century and that the Aldobrandeschi were established there in the eighth. By the middle of the twelfth century the family had reached the dignity of counts palatine. Under these counts Sovana reached the culmination of her prosperity in the following century, as the capital of the still undivided *contea* which extended from Monte Amiata to the sea and southward toward Rome.

In 1267 the famous Conte Rosso still ruled it and in the pageantry accompanying the wedding of his daughter Margherita we see the symbol of its climax. The bridegroom was Guy de Montfort, who, as will be remembered, was the son of Simon de Montfort, that "flower of all chivalry," who coming from France in the reign of King Henry III of England became Earl of Leicester. Having led the barons against the King, he was taken prisoner and beheaded. Guy, his son, fled to France where he joined Charles of Anjou and went with him on his expedition to Italy and with whose success there it is said he had much to do. After the death of Manfred, Charles of Anjou as King of Naples created De Montfort his vicar general in Tuscany and it was at this time that he asked for and obtained the hand of Margherita.

Standing in the midst of Sovana's present desolation it is hard to reconstruct in one's imagination the scene of that pictorial event, but Signor Nicolosi thus evokes a

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

vision of the past when "Sovana in the flower of her magnificence, on that long-ago day of April, celebrated the bridal of Margherita Aldobrandeschi. From the fortress, formidable but superb, issued the nuptial cortège, advancing between the dividing crowds of the joyous populace, with the blare of trumpets, the waving of banners, the fluttering of gorgeous draperies from every window, under a rain of roses with which the girlhood of Sovana, the companions of the golden-haired Margherita, strewed the ground before her. Cavaliers of the Angevin nobility clad with foreign elegance and displaying the last refinements of gallantry came in the train of the bridegroom, to render homage to the famed Conte Rosso and his beautiful daughter and mixed with the lords of the Maremma, ruder, more virile, but not less sumptuous.

"There came also other Aldobrandeschi comprising all the ramifications of the family, forgetting for the day all discord and controversy. Besides these were many a warrior and prelate. Here were victors over Manfred at Benevento, defenders of Sovana at the imperial siege, veterans grown old in harness, in the wake of the red lion of the Aldobrandeschi or beneath Montfort's standard of the golden swords, all mingling in an acclaiming multitude. In the midst of a throng of noble youths bearing the ensign of the scarlet lily, Giannozzo degli Adimari, defender of the Guelf cause—vindicator at Colle, of the slaughter of Montaperti—represented the august commune of Florence. Among a white cloud of clergy came David, Bishop of Sovana, lending the dignity of the papacy to the consecration of the marriage and Azzo, Bishop of Grosseto, sent by that city out of gratitude to the noble and ancient house of Aldobrandeschi; and among all this radiance of color, this splendor of gold and brocade, shone the blonde loveliness of Margherita the Pearl of Sovana—Sovana the powerful, the opulent, the glorious."

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



THE PIAZZA OF SOVANA

Dazzling was the spectacle, auspicious every prospect, yet this marriage was but a brief episode in the life of the bride. Her husband was almost at once called from her side to fight the battles of Charles of Anjou, his absence was prolonged and before he was released to return to her a tragedy was enacted that resulted in their final separation. Guy de Montfort had never ceased to nurse the hope of avenging his father's death upon the royal house of England, and suddenly an occasion presented itself. At Viterbo in 1271 there assembled a concourse of princes and prelates for the election of a pope to succeed Clement VI. In this company came Guy de Montfort and also Prince Henry, nephew of King Henry III of England. Concealing his scheme, De Montfort kept a smooth exterior, mingled with the crowd, and waited for his oppor-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

tunity. It came when high mass was being celebrated in a church close to the papal palace. Such sacred places were popular for a planned assassination in those days. He singled out his victim, took up his position, and waited.

With devout invocation, with swelling chant, amid fragrant clouds from swinging censers the high ceremony proceeded till, at that most solemn moment—the elevation of the Host—when every head was bowed, De Montfort sprang upon the unconscious Prince Henry and stabbed him again and again. Then striking his dripping dagger into the air above his head he rushed toward the church door. There a knot of his friends met him, “Your father was dragged!” cried out one of them. De Montfort whirled about. So stricken was the congregation before this ghastly deed, this dreadful profanation, that for the moment not a member of it stirred to arrest the assassin. He darted back to his victim and grasping the dead prince by the hair dragged him to the door where flinging the body from him he rushed out and mounting his horse galloped away toward Pitigliano to secure the protection of his father-in-law.

Il Conte Rosso, between horror of the deed and fear of the English King’s vengeance, unwillingly concealed his son-in-law for a few days but refused to be responsible for him longer. De Montfort, driven from this refuge, took leave of Margherita—history does not say with what measure of grief on her side—and left Pitigliano for the last time. For years he carried on the profession of a soldier but afar from Tuscany, excommunicated by the church and virtually leading the life of a fugitive. At last, pardoned by a new pope and once more fighting under the banner of Charles of Anjou, he was taken prisoner by the Aragonese admiral Ruggiero di Loria and died miserably in a Sicilian prison.

His Margherita had not waited to become a widow be-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

fore beginning the unbridled career of license upon which the chroniclers comment with such severity and which continued for the rest of her life, toward the end of which she was rebuked by the Church and the sentence of excommunication pronounced upon her. That she had many husbands, acknowledged or morganatic, is established. Among them the shadowy figure of Nello Pannocchieschi appears and disappears, teasing one's curiosity but eluding it. "The Magnificent Knight" he was called, a courageous and lawless fighter, a ravager, a robber, and an assassin. Was Margherita married to him, or was she not? In any case, there remains that tomb of the child Binduccio in the little church at Massa Marittima, with its Latin inscription reading as follows:—

Here lies Binduccio
Son of Margherita, Countess Palatine
and of
Nello di Pietra Pannocchieschi
A. D. 1300

After the great days of those centuries began the gradual decline of Sovana. As if to symbolize it, the bell of the cathedral was carried off to Siena, where it now hangs among those in the tower of the cathedral. San Bernardino speaks of this transfer, so grievous to the people of the despoiled town.

"Sovana," he says, "is the name of the greatest bell in our duomo of Siena, which rings every morning at sunrise, and it is so called because the Sieneese took it away from the beautiful duomo of desolate Sovana."

This humiliation aroused sorrow and resentment but by that time the people were helpless to resist encroachment, and the deterioration of the town advanced so rapidly that Siena herself was alarmed. It did not please her to lose outright even one among her subject cities. Perhaps she valued the proud record of Sovana, at all

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

events she tried to stay its depopulation with encouragement and financial assistance but it was too late and Sovana gradually became the ruin we have already described. More than once colonization was attempted as a means of rehabilitation, the last time in 1745, when upward of fifty families were sent to settle there. The effort failed; Sovana had then long been cursed with the malaria that had invaded the whole Maremma and the hapless colonists appear to have succumbed to the unhappy conditions they found themselves in. Repetti makes the significant comment that ninety years later not a single descendant of one of these families was to be discovered in Sovana.





THE WAY TO PITIGLIANO

CHAPTER XV

PITIGLIANO



OURNEYING eastward to reach Pitigliano, we traverse a table-land stretching away for miles to distant lines of blue hills. As we proceed we find it curiously gashed at intervals by deep, leafy ravines, hiding streams of water in their depths. At length we arrive suddenly at the brink of such a ravine, one that has forked and widened, and we pause with a chasm at our feet, opposite a weird, unreal city growing out of a great oval pedestal of tufa and fitted exactly to its rim. The cliff and the unbroken crown of houses outlining it are of the same hue of mingled rust and umber. Not a touch of bright color varies that sombre homogeneous mass; the balconies, the trellises that diversify other ramparts are wanting here. It looks immeasurably old, weary, and, withal, menacing.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Trying to distinguish between rock and building the eye is bewildered. Where does the one cease and the other begin? The tall houses in their unbroken ranks form but a continuation of the ledge they spring from; yet below them windows look out from the face of the cliff. The explanation is, that the stone has been hollowed to form additional lower stories and only choice and convenience mark the limit. Sometimes a flat-sided mass of tufa stands erect, and the adjoining householder takes possession, hollows it, and adds a wing to his dwelling instead of a basement. Toward the west the town narrows like the prow of a ship and terminates in a gigantic cylindrical jut covered by a single grim building. Needless to say the city has never been walled for its situation precludes any such necessity, resting as it does upon a ring of cliffs.

At the base of this circular foundation is a line of arched openings, curiously accenting the architectural character of the whole. Whether the caverns within were dwellings or sepulchres is a matter for discussion. From this point the ground drops quickly in a series of terraces of every irregular shape, planted with tiny vegetable beds, and honeycombed with smaller arches within which are stores of firewood, stabling for donkeys, and the like. All is bounded by a natural moat formed by the two little rivers, Melata and Lente, which surround it, and at its westerly extremity mingle their waters and proceed on their way to join the Santa Fiora and so find the sea. The whole forms a picture so unparalleled that as one's eyes dwell upon it, it is hard to believe it other than a fantastic illusion. Yet if it be tangible, it is of such a spot that its savage history seems credible—the war of brother against brother, of father against son; the magnificence, the valor, the ferocity, the treachery, the unnamable crimes of its overlords, the Orsini.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Looking for access to the city leads to the discovery that on its eastern rampart it is attached as by a narrow isthmus to the mainland. By means of this you pass along a road hewn out of the rock which in some places rises fifty feet above it, to the portal of the city, which is entered between huge buttresses, through two gates and under a portcullis, and opens upon the lesser piazza. This is bounded upon its outer edge by a splendid arcade bearing the aqueduct. Beyond it is the main piazza on which stands the great Orsini castle which still shows the fine and severe outlines of its early form, and rears its Guelfic battlements as of yore; but its threatening character has been sadly tamed by a coat of plaster whose flat surface covers the rough stones of the construction, though the plaster in its turn has become old and many-tinted. The circumference of the original fortress is difficult to trace, changed and curtailed as it is. Houses have been packed inside its ancient boundary and portions of it incorporated in them. The main entrance is reached from the piazza by means of an inclined plane guarded by a grotesque lion of antique and battered appearance. Within are two fine courts; in the first, a beautifully moulded door frame of white limestone has carved above it

NICOLAUS III URSINUS

thus commemorating Niccolò the warrior, the greatest of his line. Ascending a short flight of steps the second and principal court is reached, rich with columns and pilasters, with arcaded staircases, heraldic travertine portal, and sculptured well-head. Here one finds the lion of the Aldobrandeschi as well as the rose of the Orsini—that rose said to have sprung from a field of battle soaked with the life-blood of an early heroic ancestor.

No descendant of that terrible and turbulent house dwells within its walls. The spirit of the place has under-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



ENTRANCE TO THE ORSINI CASTLE

gone a change, for it is now the Bishop's Palace and in his absence we were permitted to enter. The good bishop does not welcome luxury, nor does he encourage beauty. His rooms are bare to asceticism; there are many crucifixes, cheap religious prints lend the only adornment, and the hard, uncompromising furniture stands stiffly against the walls. An iron bed, a desk, and a few books in one room seemed to indicate a study, but nothing more cheerless and uninhabited could be pictured. After we had left the Bishop's modest quarters, the kindly official of the household who had admitted us showed us other floors, full of resounding emptiness, while he threw open dusty shutters and exposed vast apartments of an ugliness so depressing that no words can express their dreariness. It is whispered that the coarse wash upon the walls covers frescoes of a character too florid to be tolerated by the

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



THE ALDOBRANDESCHI LION

decorum that now reigns there. Having arrived at the top of the last staircase, we were glad to emerge upon a lofty terrace, to breathe fresh air, and to look down upon the conglomerated roofs of the building, prodigious in extent, rich in color, and weighted in many places, not with the usual rough stone or boulder, but with masses of antique copings and mouldings, relics of its earlier architecture. In all the castle there is but one ancient and significant thing remaining.

As we began to descend from the roof, I murmured a question, an answering light shone in the eye of our guide, and with a more animated step he led us to a round tower. Here was a curious little turret chamber lined with nearly obliterated frescoes, quaint and gay, and from it descended a circular staircase. At a certain point in the descent an obstruction appeared, a low wall built directly across it about waist-high, and below this only darkness, and the dim outline of a large opening. Was it really possible? Could this be the beginning of that famous underground passage, the *sotteraneo*, that led from Pitigliano to Sorano and which was large enough to ride through on horseback—that last refuge of the Orsini tyrants when they had taxed the forbearance of their people beyond endurance and were reduced to flight? Once the shapeless opening had a gate of incredible thickness and strength, and when



Pitigliano.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

it had clanged behind the fugitive and been fastened, it was as firm as the surrounding wall and he was safe to make that strange torch-lighted transit. I looked at our companion. There was no doubt in his expression, his mind was as firmly confident of the existence of that mysterious gallery as of his own. It dealt with the thought of a hollowed passage seven miles in length without flinching. I must reluctantly confess that doubt has been thrown upon it, that the close bond between the two cities has been called merely a symbolic one; but for my part, having been assured of its reality by more than one respected citizen of Pitigliano, I choose to believe in it.

Emerging upon the piazza again, the main thoroughfare of the city, none too wide, opens from the opposite side leading to the municipio and the cathedral. The latter rebuilt and daubed with whitewash is both dirty and uninteresting. Outside the door of the municipio, upon a heavy pillar about six feet high, covered with symbolic carving, the Orsini bear sits. Beyond the two main thoroughfares there is a network of narrow streets, picturesque, crooked, and unclean; there are more curious turns, more black holes, more arches complete, broken, or twisted, more breakneck descents than in any other town known to me. After a time one realizes that the fantastic impression comes partly from the adaptation of the very rock on which the city is planted. It rises up out of the pavement to form the foundation of a building; it juts forth between walls and is moulded into a bracket or an arch, and sometimes a huge mass suddenly projects itself in the midst of formal construction and is left there rebellious and undisciplined. Everywhere a too numerous population overflows for the boundaries of the town are immutably fixed. About one third are Jews formerly confined in their ghetto, but now living as they please with all the privileges of the other inhabitants. They

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

have turned to agriculture, an occupation one hardly associates with that race; and with certain added virtues, have perhaps also acquired failings.

"The Hebrews," said my friend, the Sienese, "used to live according to strict rule, but now—why they get as drunk as Christians!" He added that before the unification of Italy this place was a great smuggling post, being near the boundary between Tuscany and the States of the Church.

The origin of Pitigliano reaches back to Roman and Etruscan times. But remains of the latter, such as still exist in the neighboring towns of Sovana and Saturnia, are not to be found here; and almost nothing of the Roman occupation, though a diverting tradition exists, which relates that a certain gentleman of fortune, Pitiglio by name, being in Rome, stole the golden crown from the Jove of the Campidoglio and flying with it to the north, founded this city, giving it his name. There are those who say it is he who is commemorated by a grotesque carving on the outer wall of the church of Santa Maria, which shows a person of a cheerful countenance whose either hand being extended at a right angle from his body, is being greedily swallowed by attendant dragons.

The province underwent the vicissitudes of all Italy during its ruinous invasions, and from a period of fertility and prosperity, declined with the rest of the Maremma. When its authentic history begins—about the ninth century—it was governed by the famous Aldobrandeschi family, whose power waxed till, in the twelfth century, their rule as Counts of Santa Fiora extended from Monte Amiata west to Grosseto, and south beyond the borders of Tuscany. But, turbulent and quarrelsome, they warred with each other, and their lack of solidarity was one of the causes which led to their loss of sovereignty and the breaking up of their great realm. It was their vaunt that they



Pitigliano. The Aqueduct.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

owned more fortified towns than there were days in the year, and Fra Filippo in his Book of Ensamples remarks that such was their conduct they furnished in the end a large contingent to the devil. Princely brigands and marauders they were, and as they held the key to the two great southern highways, that by the shore and the great inland one, the Via Francigena, they could descend at will upon all travelers and exact what they pleased, till at last Siena curbed their intolerable lawlessness.

At the fateful battle of Montaperti the famous Aldobrandino il Conte Rosso, son of Guglielmo—"il Gran Tosco" of Dante—found himself opposed by his cousin, Aldobrandino di Bonifazio. These two being the heads of the family and neither willing to submit to the other as paramount, a separation of territory was agreed upon a few years later, the River Albegna being roughly the line of partition and Aldobrandino di Bonifazio retained the title of Count of Santa Fiora and that portion to the north, while Aldobrandino il Conte Rosso took the cities of the south, Pitigliano, Sorano, Monte Vitozzo, and the rest. In this latter branch the male succession came to an end in the second generation, when il Conte Rosso left as his heir that daughter Margherita whose story has already been given. The Countess Margherita, although celebrated for her many marriages, possessed at her death but one living child, a daughter. This daughter, Anastasia, was married in 1297 to Romano Orsini, and thus was the Orsini line brought in, which thereafter ruled for three hundred years.

As early as the twelfth century there was an Orsini Pope, Celestine III, who raised his family to eminence. A hundred years later, Cardinal Giovanni Orsini, one of the great churchmen of history, was made Pope Nicholas III and through his influence the Orsini became the most powerful of the great Roman families, owning three strong

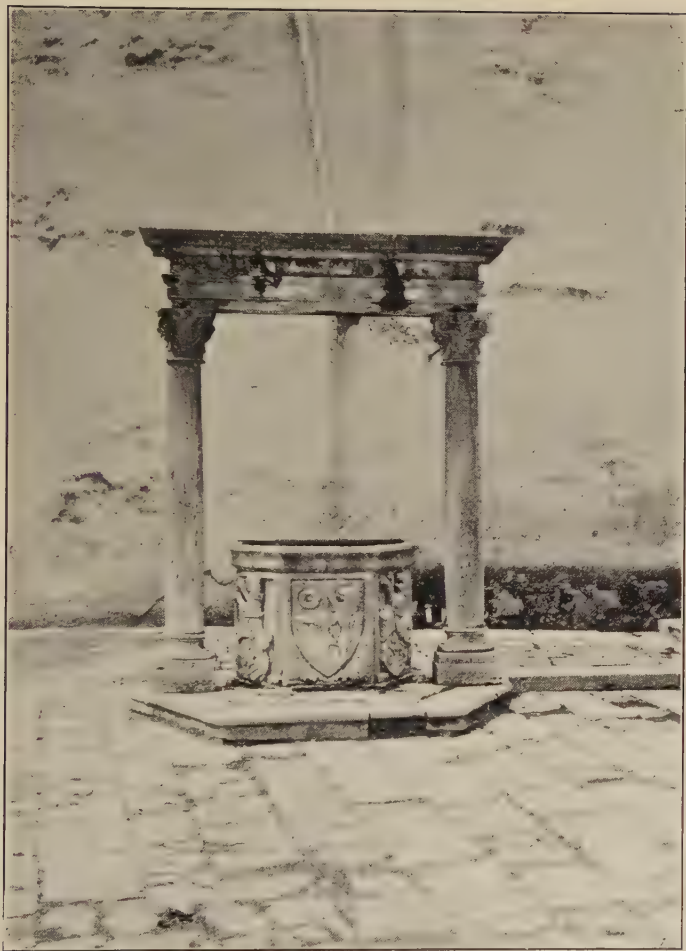
BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

fortresses in Rome including the Castle of Sant' Angelo, besides many houses on both sides of the Tiber. Romano Orsini was a nephew of this Pope, a *condottiere*, brave but brutal. He embodied that reputation for caprice and cruelty which his posterity carried on through generations of outrage and violence. Other *condottieri* followed Romano, till in the fifteenth century Count Niccolò III gained fame throughout Italy. Celebrated for his crimes as well as his bravery, he was undoubtedly the most illustrious member of his family. In that warlike age, scarcely was there an important battle in Italy where he did not command on one side or the other, distinguishing himself especially in the Venetian service. There is a grandiose monument to him in the Church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, and another more beautiful and less pretentious in Brescia.

Of his descendants in the following century, the history of Niccolò IV illustrates the characteristics of the family and of the time better, perhaps, than any other.

Between the third Niccolò and his great grandson Niccolò IV there had been two Orsini counts, both of them cruel, treacherous, and tyrannical. The second, who was Gian Francesco father of Niccolò IV, fell weakly under the influence of a plebeian mistress, Rosata Agostini, whose every caprice he indulged, and whose son Orso helped to complicate the succession and increase bloodshed at the death of his father. A few years sufficed to render Gian Francesco odious to the subjects whom he intolerably oppressed. Meanwhile his heir Niccolò IV grown to man's estate, and following the soldierly profession of the family, was fighting in Germany under the emperor, Charles V, and growing ripe for the career in which as the next Count Orsini he became celebrated. Bruscalupi ruefully remarks of him in the above campaign:

"In a combat at this time, Niccolò, amid prodigies of



Pitigliano. In the Court of the Orsini Castle.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



ORSINI PALACE. DOORWAY

valor, was sorely wounded, but after a time recovered, and this was for us a profound misfortune. We shall now set forth actions of this same Niccolò which compel one to desire that he might have died in that encounter."

Indeed while fighting the battles of all the world, the Orsini made time to be ever at war with each other; and Niccolò IV, though absent, contrived, through agents whom he kept in Pitigliano, to foment the discontent of the people to his own advantage. At last, in 1547, driven to desperation by the barbarities of Gian Francesco, they broke into open revolt and assaulted the castle. For hours they battered at the walls, and Gian Francesco, from loopholes above, gazed down upon the infuriated mass of human beings whom he had wantonly driven to this mad hatred. While he looked he trembled, and

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

trembling he shrank back as he thought of the moment when the gates must give way, and of what would then inevitably follow. Silently he descended to the black opening of that subterranean passage which led to Sorano, and fled away into the night. The crowd, unconscious that the prey they were hunting had eluded them, at last burst in the gates and rushed into the castle. They surged through room after room searching for Gian Francesco, their wrath every moment growing hotter, till at length convinced that he had escaped their revenge, they fell upon the unfortunate Auditor of State and killed him, after which they wreaked their fury upon the family possessions, destroying portraits, and burning all documents, public and private, which they could lay hands upon; and, still unsatisfied, attacked the family tombs, tearing to pieces the monument to Niccolò III. They then tied ropes to the stone lions at the foot of the great staircase and dragged them from their pedestals. The following day they declared Gian Francesco deposed and sent messages inviting Niccolò IV to return to Pitigliano and take his place. Their imaginations did not reach to the possibility that they might be making an unfortunate exchange. He came and was received with great rejoicings.

During these proceedings Gian Francesco remained shut up in Sorano, but this position, only seven miles away, was quite too near for the peace of mind of his son Niccolò who proceeded secretly to corrupt certain important citizens of Sorano with presents and promises, besides winning over with gold the guard of the castle. Within a fortnight he was ready to dislodge his father. It was a frigid night of January and a dense mist covered Sorano. Gian Francesco, secure and comfortable, sat at a late supper with a party of friends. Breaking in upon their noisy enjoyment came the announcement by a terrified page

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

that Niccolò with an armed band was close upon the castle. Gian Francesco sprang from his seat and shouted to the garrison. The corridors were empty, the gates open, the draw-bridge lowered, he was betrayed! As Niccolò entered triumphantly from the town, Gian Francesco slipped unattended from the north portal and hastened away through the thick darkness. After some hours, worn out, he ventured to ask at a farm house for a night's lodging; and in the early morning, cold and comfortless, he stole away over the wet fields and through the dripping woods, till he had made his way to the lonely castle of Monte Vitozzo where he took shelter. From here he sent numerous letters of complaint to potentates whom he endeavored to interest in reinstating him, while Niccolò despatched a like number justifying his course, which he explained was taken at the earnest solicitation of Pitigliano suffering under the cruelty and injustice of his father. To the correspondents of both it seemed the easier course to refrain from meddling in the affairs of either, and Niccolò remained in possession. Aware that as a usurper he must strengthen his position, he promptly gave military aid in quarters where it was politic to do so, and by a series of adroit manœuvres, made it obligatory that he should be supported in return. He then turned his attention to the improvement of the city. He added to the castle and strengthened the fortifications; and he built for himself a luxurious villa surrounded with wondrous gardens.

On the opposite bank of the chasm which rings Pitigliano about, above the pretty cascade of the stream Prochio, which falls into it on the north, he chose a site for it. An elevated plateau lies there, commanding a great view over the wide plain and the distant dome of Monte Amiata. Here the villa rose, very spacious and splendid, but now only to be traced by bits of wall built against by an humble

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

farm house, and by a few broken pillars and arches half buried in the ground. Tradition tells us gardens of delight surrounded it; that of shaded alleys, of the murmur of fountains, of the fragrance of flowers, it lacked nothing; that from it stretched away a noble park which merged in woods where wild game abounded and hunting parties ranged. To-day of garden, park, and timber not a trace remains. Husbandmen till the ground once dark with forests and wild grasses wave over the site of villa and garden. Yet it is a sweet place, solitary but for the company of a few sheep, open to sun and breeze and sung to by the waters flowing at the foot of cliffs that bound it upon two sides. Just over the edge of these one makes discoveries. A pathway is cut into the face of the seamed masses of tufa, and, bordering it, among scented banks of wild thyme, there are seats disposed in semi-circular form, gracefully shaped and moulded. In this little roofless pavilion a group could rest and gaze out over the plain to the distant hills, or glance down upon the green tree-tops filling the depth below. But of all that still exists the most impressive objects are the colossal statues that were carved upon the spot, out of the living rock. The headless torso of one half-reclining figure still rests aloft upon a gigantic block of stone, seeming to brood over the portentous past, of which so little is left. Two others, prone among the herbage, corroded, stained with damp, patterned over with lichen, yet bear evidence to the heroic lines upon which all in this strange place was planned.

But while Niccolò thus lavished riches upon his own aggrandisement, he took no pains to establish himself in the favor of the subjects who had invited him to rule over them. On the contrary, he oppressed them in new and ingenious ways, despoiling some, enriching others, and thus craftily stirring up discord and bitterness among them, for the purpose of forming a clique engaged to

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

protect him. Indeed if there was a crime uncommitted by the earlier members of the family, Niccolò IV appears to have corrected the omission. Scarcely two years had passed before the people, heartily sick of his misrule, were conspiring to bring back their former tyrant. These intentions were discovered and those involved suffered death or torture of a kind so terrible, that Niccolò considered it calculated to discourage further insubordination.

It now occurred to him that as Siena was keeping but a small garrison in Sorano, the opportunity was favorable for retaking it, which he did, and gave the unhappy city over to such destruction and pillage that it was left more desolate than can be described. He then turned, and with disarming magnanimity offered aid to Siena herself, at that time in the throes of the unhappy struggle with the emperor, Charles V, in which France and Spain took part.

At the end of this war he was publicly thanked, called the liberator of Siena, and decorated with orders. This episode closed the enterprises he engaged in at a distance, and he returned to resume his usual methods at home. These included a form of princely brigandage, such as sending detachments of soldiers to capture flocks and herds beyond his own borders and an occasional plundering expedition against a neighboring town. His people of Pitigliano also suffered more acutely as time went on, and especially were their feelings outraged by his treatment of their churches. These were robbed of sacred images or rudely taken over for his own use as storehouses and it is said he even caused balls to be given in one of them. His subjects had recourse to imploring all the Christian potentates in turn, to be released from his intolerable tyranny, but each one, immersed in his own affairs, remained unmoved.

Nor could the Pope be roused by the most fervent prayers for deliverance, together with descriptions of the

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

desecration of his churches, until suddenly startled by the discovery that he himself was suffering a money loss.

Niccolò, with incredible effrontery, had not only established the manufacture of counterfeit coin in his own castle but was distributing it in the pontifical territory. The Pope now moved promptly, he seized Niccolò and threw him into the Castle of Sant' Angelo, where he lay for four months. Meantime Gian Francesco his father, living in squalid poverty in Rome, had never ceased his supplications both to Pope and Emperor that they should interfere in his behalf.

Niccolo was brought forth and ordered to reconcile himself with his father. It was agreed that Niccolò should continue to rule but that he should settle a pension upon Gian Francesco for life. He therefore returned to Pitigliano but the townspeople were little satisfied. Hopeless of relief and driven to desperation, they began to consider ridding themselves of their tyrant by the only means that seemed left them. The count, watchful and suspicious, discovered that his life was in danger and determined to take full revenge. He feigned entire ignorance that any disaffection existed, and shortly had it given out that he had been taken seriously ill. On the same day by one pretext or another he decoyed twenty of those he suspected into the castle. All was done so quietly that no one's attention had been attracted, until it was noticed that the drawbridge was up and the castle in a state of defence. The townspeople looked on in surprise and could see no reason for these unusual preparations. The following morning a dreadful spectacle met their eyes. Twenty heads were suspended upon the castle wall. A cry of horror went up, terror struck the hearts of those whose friends had been absent from home the night before. They flew to the piazza: there one recognized a father, one a brother, another a husband, another still a lover. Wails

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and curses filled the air but the sufferers were helpless; orders had been given that at the first sign of rebellion the town should be swept by artillery.

The dreadful day passed, the sun shone upon that row of ghastly heads, the grief and fury of the people drew them together, night came and they went to their homes to consult and to wait. Niccolò observed nothing that led him to consider with anything but satisfaction the lesson he had given, still prudence suggested to him that it might be well at this time to make a visit to Sorano, and at night, by means of the underground passage, he betook himself thither. He remained there till he judged it wise to return, but the people did not forget and their hatred was furtively fomented by the agents of the Medici, always hovering near, in waiting for the time when the domain of the Orsini might safely be taken over.

At last the people of both towns came to a secret understanding, those of the one being no less eager to drive out the tyrant than those of the other. They agreed upon the day and hour for rising, in whichever town Niccolò might be. He was in Sorano. At a given signal the streets were suddenly filled with a vengeful throng. A hoarse roar from numberless throats filled the air, swelling in waves ever louder and louder, that deep-throated bay-ing, ominous and terrible—the voice of a multitude crying out for blood. It rose to the mighty fortress sitting up above Sorano like a bird of prey. It reached the ears of Niccolò, amazed and unprepared.

“Palle! Palle! Death to Niccolò!”

His first impulse was rage and resistance, but his own soldiers in Sorano had forsaken him and barely saving his life, he fled like other Orsini before him, to that final refuge, Monte Vitozzo.

The leaders now offered to place themselves under the protection of Florence, and Cosimo lost no time in des-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

patching his emissary, Francesco Vinta, to direct the negotiations. In a letter which he sent back Vinta describes his reception in Pitigliano:

"At a half-mile distance from the town I was met by a company of citizens on horseback, and after many embraces and handsome and gracious greetings, I entered the streets, where were soldiers orderly drawn up as I passed between. The women filled the doors and windows and even the roofs all crying out continually with one voice, '*Palle! Palle! Duca!*' The head men of the city dismounted from their horses and received me uncovered, and after, they led my horse through the most important streets and for pure content the women knelt and wept as we passed by. Also the bells rang and the cannon were fired."

But other eyes than those of the Medici were fixed upon Pitigliano. The valuable *contea* was desired in many quarters. Over the shoulders of Cosimo looked a pope and an emperor. Medici protection they felt might easily be turned into Medici possession, and Cosimo with a sigh saw that the time was not yet ripe. The three potentates came to a compromise which was to fetch Gian Francesco and prop him for a second time upon the unstable chair of state. This was done but with such conditions as left him hardly more than a vassal of Cosimo. While these events were taking place in Pitigliano, Niccolò contrived to creep into Sorano and intrench himself there anew, and thus prepare an uneasy future for his father. Gian Francesco now associated with himself his illegitimate son Orso and a new series of plots, intrigues, and treacheries began. Niccolò attempted to murder his father. Failing this, he essayed getting possession of the citadel through bribing the garrison. This Orso discovered in time and Niccolò, who headed the party, escaping with his own life, beheld his band of followers blown to



Pitigliano. Vicolo Venezia.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

atoms before his eyes through a mine sprung by Orso. Thus with varying fortunes, Niccolò aided by the Pope and Orso by Cosimo, a year or two passed, till Gian Francesco, wearied out, retired for the last time to Rome and died there, leaving Orso in his place.

Strife between the brothers now raged more fiercely than ever and this persisted even after an imperial mandate had recognized Niccolò as the legitimate heir. Niccolò therefore ruled in Sorano, while Orso refusing to resign in his brother's favor kept possession of Pitigliano, secretly sustained by the Medici. Orso was a typical Orsini and the close of his life was characteristically dramatic. It happened that in the summer of 1557 Prince Farnese journeyed from Florence to Pitigliano to pay a visit to Orso. As the latter was absent the countess graciously received the prince and invited him to remain till her husband should return. Prince Farnese accordingly waited for some five days, but as at the end of that time Orso had not reached home, he took leave of the countess and went on his way.

Orso appeared soon after, was told of the visit, and convinced himself that his wife, Isabella, of whom he was inordinately jealous, must have accepted improper attentions from the prince. First pondering for a time, he sent messengers after the guest, begging him to return and adding that he was preparing a great boar hunt in his honor. Prince Farnese, suspecting nothing, retraced his steps and was welcomed with the utmost affability. The boar hunt took place, but the prince did not return from it. Orso now watched his wife as assiduously as was consistent with his devoting much time to a mistress whom he kept in Sorano. Returning one morning, after having spent the night there, he met his wife upon the little bridge over the stream, Prochio, and greeted her with:

"What has been going on in Pitigliano?"

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

The lady having no news to report innocently replied, "Oh, much the same thing as in Sorano, I suppose."

The husband was infuriated at what he chose to consider an insolent avowal of retaliation on her part. He fell upon her, strangled her and threw her body over the bridge into the torrent below. The spot bears to this day the lugubrious name which connects it with that crime, Poggio Strozzone, signifying the Hill of the mighty Strangler.

In the same year Cosimo decided that to abandon Orso and favor Niccolò would be the more advantageous course for himself; he therefore invented a pretext to summon Orso to Florence where he detained him. Fate now cleared the path for Niccolò. The Duke Farnese had not forgotten the murder of his son nor his own fixed purpose of revenge. Orso in Pitigliano was difficult to reach, Orso in Florence was ready to his hand. One night as Orso was crossing the Ponte Vecchio he was set upon and mortally wounded. A few days later he died.

Toward the close of Niccolò's long life, history came near to repeating itself. His only son, Alessandro, considering that his turn to rule was being unconscionably postponed, adopted the simple and direct method of attempting to assassinate his father. Not succeeding, he tried to capture Pitigliano, but, a second time unsuccessful, fled to Florence and appealed to the Medici. They, with their habitual craft, accepted the rôle of mediators and, supported by them, he advanced upon his father who in his turn fled, taking refuge in Monte Vitozzo. Negotiations resulted in a reconciliation of much the same satirical character as that of a generation previous. Alessandro elaborately apologized to his father, then settled a pension upon him and ruled in his stead, while Niccolò retired to Florence where he died four years later.

As for Alessandro he had not even the virtues of his ancestors partly to balance his vices. He lived a life of



Pitigliano. Via Sovana.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

self-indulgence with the most ostentatious show of luxury and bankrupted his patrimony so that eventually he was obliged to submit to the sale of it and after protracted bargaining, it passed definitely into the hands of the Medici, the destiny which had so long awaited it.

A monstrous and gory history this, but the paving-stones of Pitigliano show no blood stains now, and the inhabitants do not bear evidence of being depressed by the tragedies of the past. Old men sit gossiping by the public fountain and prankish little boys scamper about the open spaces of the piazza.

Old women, let it be said, are not to be found in the company of the men of their generation. They are much too occupied at home, it being their business as grandmothers to tend the younger children while the mothers are away at work. Thus life goes on cheerfully enough and the arrival of the diligence is the most exciting event of the day, as it rattles into the town and draws up before the Albergo della Posta opposite the Castle. This *albergo* can be recommended for excellent food. It is one of those households where the mother cooks, the daughter waits upon guests, and the father fills all other departments.

In this way the Pieroni family is able to conduct its hostelry without the help of outsiders other than two stalwart porters, who attend solely to the luggage of customers. These porters are of the female sex and aged respectively sixteen and nineteen. By some occult method of intelligence they appear in the piazza simultaneously with any vehicle whose occupants show the least promise of an acceptance of their services, and they shoulder heavy valises with a gallantry that testifies to their competence. This done, they protest with raised tones and folded arms against any remuneration when you arrive. No, no! A trifle perhaps upon your departure. They rely upon your honorable memory for that, but now

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

—absolutely nothing. Thus do they eliminate any inter-loper who might meanly come between them and their just fees.

The inn occupies the first floor above the street and its rooms are as satellites about its important centre, the kitchen. Not that the kitchen is large; on the contrary, it is uncommonly small; yet so carefully is it adjusted that its priestess appears to find it ample. While occupied there, she can glance out through a railing of darkly polished wood, which forms the upper half of the inner partition, and thus command the series of dining-rooms that diverges from it. To the right of her, a small square one; to the left, another; in front, a larger one, leading to the largest of all which lies transversely to the first three. Yet in spite of all this space, I never saw during my visits more than five people at a time partaking of meals. No doubt on market days the long tables are in use, on ordinary occasions a pair of young officers may perhaps be descried sipping wine in the room on the left, while on the right a customer of humbler rank bends above a dish of macaroni, and apart, in the large *sala*, still another couple chats while awaiting the preparation of a special dish. But beyond the rooms mentioned there is still another smaller and choicer. Here an oval table stands and a sideboard holds the best glass and china. In this exclusive apartment were we served, and content should be those who partake of the cooking of Signora Clementina, and enjoy the caressing ministrations of her little daughter Lorenzina, a soft, attaching creature with the sweetest of warbling voices. Arriving late and unexpected in the midst of the Pieroni family, I am tempted, as an example of its resourcefulness, to give the menu of the dinner served to us an hour later. Beginning with anchovies on toast, it proceeded through clear soup, risotto, roasted kid and pigeons, artichokes and potatoes, fruit



Pitigliano. Porta Sovana.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

and green almonds, to brandied cherries and coffee, all admirably prepared.

Whatever changes Pitigliano has undergone in the last three centuries, its streets have not lost their look of antiquity nor have all reminders of earlier times disappeared from the buildings. The loiterer in its network of byways, for example, comes occasionally upon an amusing inscription like the following, in the Vicolo Venezia. Over an arched entrance is a coat of arms in high relief and the name MEO. Beneath one reads:—

AMA DIO
E NON FALIRE
VIVE ALLEGRO
ELLASA DIRE

with the date, May eighth 1500.

Now and again one pauses before a fifteenth century doorway whose frame shows charming Renaissance mouldings. As for the interiors of the houses, I never met a professional guide in Pitigliano, but if the traveler shows the sympathy and appreciation he feels for their city, he is made welcome by the owners to enter those houses that contain relics of the past existing in corners of once proud palaces. In one such is a fine mantel and above it a Piccolomini coat of arms, both executed in many-tinted enamel. Among the houses that hang upon the verge of the cliffs there is one heavily arcaded, which was an Orsini palace and upon the inner side has a grandiose gateway. Its stately windows have been filled in, its spacious apartments divided, and who knows how many families of humble workers now nest there.

Of such workers, that portion employed in agriculture has, as may be imagined, a long and difficult journey to reach the cultivatable land, and consequently donkeys that are used in the fields abound inside the town, as well as in those primitive stables before described that are hol-

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

lowed in the rock. It is as well, therefore, not to count upon undisturbed slumber late in the morning, for the laborers of Pitigliano are thrifty, and by sunrise the tramp of their feet, their shouts, and the sonorous lamentations of their donkeys fill the air. It is a pity that nature has seen fit to limit the donkey, a being of so many good qualities, to a mode of expression which indicates despondency or complaint even though he may be in the best of spirits, but so it is. One morning as I strolled toward the many-winding stairway that leads downward from the Porta Capo di Sotto, a donkey's head emerged briskly from an arched window just at my shoulder and a vociferous and prolonged salute followed. Startled but flattered at this greeting which I was about to appropriate I soon saw my mistake. From a similar opening on the opposite side of the street the head of a second donkey shot forth and long and loudly made response. Lorenzina, who was my companion upon the walk, broke into merriment at my surprise and informed me that this exchange of amenities took place regularly each day at the same hour.

We continued westward to the Porta di Sotto, most picturesque and fantastic of portals, and, then returning, traversed the town again with windings and loiterings to the eastern gate, for it was ordained that on this particular morning we should visit the site of that bridge over the Prochio, of gruesome memory. Crossing the channeled isthmus we turned abruptly to the left and after a little, abandoned the road to walk down a slope toward the cleft through which the Prochio drops to the River Lente. Lorenzina being rather a helpless and uninformed guide, we were presently bewildered among steep descents, clumps of wild shrubs, and terraced vegetable beds. In any small perplexity of this kind it is well to have recourse to a small boy. Little boys in Italy as in other countries are compendious sources of local information, however

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

forgetful and indifferent they may become when older. Coasting a small farm house we came upon one. Could he, I asked, show us the remains of the Orsini bridge which must be close by?

"Where he killed his wife?" was the instant question.

"Yes, where he killed his wife."

He led us through the wet herbage, by way of more cabbages and artichokes, to the spot. We stood looking down. Deeply, damply profound is that narrow chasm. One broken arch of its bridge remains. Trees cling to the margin and slender ferns drape its sides. Of the water darkling below one sees little, only hears it boiling and gurgling, toward the series of leaps it takes in its downward plunge.

On the way home our conversation led to the discovery that Lorenzina had never traveled abroad, that is to say beyond sight of her native Pitigliano.

"Not even," she added wistfully, "to Sorano. I should like to see Sorano."

It was not that Lorenzina was querulous or found fault with destiny, but she felt her outlook upon life must remain limited until she had visited Sorano, seven miles away. As we talked the rain was falling, but it became my fixed determination to remain in Pitigliano long enough to carry Lorenzina on a sunny day to see her Carcassonne. And indeed no one who has beheld the wonderful little place can ever forget it, though for very different reasons from those that inspired Lorenzina's ardent wish, for it is one of the memorable towns of Italy in more than historic interest.



SORANO

CHAPTER XVI

SORANO



LYING northeast of Pitigliano, Sorano was the refuge, then virtually invulnerable, to which the Orsini hastened when their capital became for a time too hot to hold them. Wondrously, daringly picturesque it is to the traveler coming suddenly upon it after driving over a country somewhat tame in comparison. The eye dwells upon it with delight and one exclaims "Surely the finest study of roofs in Italy!" Roofs of every irregularity and every inclination, diverging, approaching, concentrating, and springing to a new level for every few feet, while over all spread mingled tints of orange and terra cotta with garnishing of green where here and there veritable hedges of tiny blossoming plants take possession of the eaves. The road introduces one to Sorano at a point where, high upon the right hand, looms the sharp angle of its fortress, presenting a pompous



Sorano.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

coat of arms of great size, while below, upon the left, the crowded mass of its dwellings lies in the dip of a saddle which at its opposite extremity terminates in the upward sweep of a ridge of rock, shaped like a mighty wave turned to stone at the moment of breaking.

The hand of man has leveled the crest of this titanic wave and made of it an airy piazza approached by a narrow staircase, but I suspect little frequented, for the inhabitants evidently prefer the sociability of the streets below, where the houses stand shoulder to shoulder crowded upon the edge of a precipice that at this point overhangs a deep ravine. At the bottom of this ravine flows the River Lente which lower in its course helps to isolate Pitigliano and here washes the boundaries of Sorano on three sides while from its opposite bank rises another series of cliffs that are perforated with curious openings, Etruscan columbaria, now literally the abode of doves who nest there and enliven the ancient sepulchres with their cooing and fluttering.

Hollowed at the base of these cliffs are great vaults that have been fashioned with real architectural beauty. This was the more easily accomplished that Sorano had the advantage of possessing a local stone, soft and easy to excavate, but hardening later. In these secret chambers lie aging choice white wines, the pride of the countryside.

Everywhere the heights and depths are green with trees, shrubs, and festooning vines, and bits of cultivation fill every fissure or pocket of soil among the rocks. It is a long way down to the river bank following the crooked paths by which one at last arrives there, but the descent is most rewarding. A warm, sheltered nook it is, full of the fragrance of wild flowers and the song of the hurrying water, and when one looks up, far up, at the town and castle suspended above one's head, it is fairly startling, so unreal, so vision-like do they appear. No one should

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

visit Sorano in haste, it is too curiously interesting, too pictorial, to be slightly treated. As my visits to it were made by daylight I cannot say how well one might sleep there, but the small inn looks possible and I can testify that it affords a good meal. We inquired there for directions to the high-hung piazza and were told how to procure a key, which it seems is necessary. Upon application the key was handed over, and the handsome youth that produced it at our request then joined us in a detached sort of way, and we climbed the steep street and steeper stairs that took us to the top together. There was a slight stiffness in his manner, but whether it was occasioned by the consciousness of being conspicuously well dressed, for it was Sunday, or whether by a desire to repel condescension I could not make out. We talked gravely of the marvellous situation of Sorano, of the incomparable outlook, of the general picturesqueness. Then we spoke of the castle. He remarked shyly and interrogatively, "They tell me there is not a finer castle than ours in all Italy?"

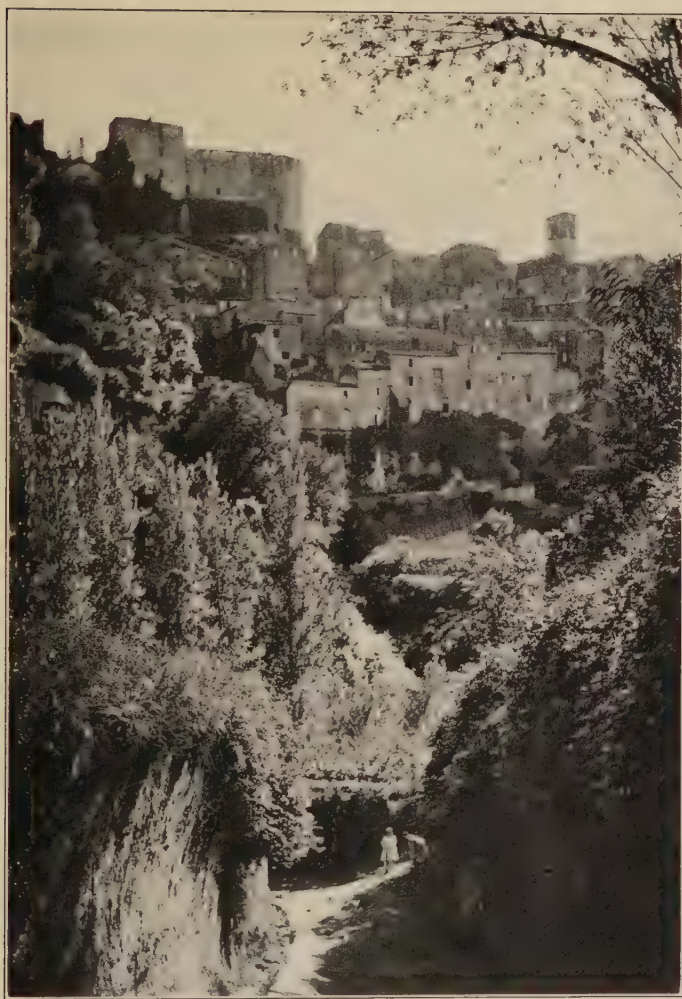
"You are not far wrong," said I.

He flushed, and turning so as to face me more directly said eagerly:

"You have traveled much in Italy perhaps, Signora?"

"Yes, I have, but I have yet to see a more massive fortress."

His eyes sparkled, he smiled and looked over at the huge bulk of the castle with repressed exultation. The ice was now broken, we chatted easily, but our subjects had little to do with the past. The castle as a present possession, lending importance to the town, gave him satisfaction; about its history he was vague. He admired the flagrant new villa which has been constructed in one of the castle courts, and evidently regarded it as an embellishment of the highest type. Before we left the



Sorano, from the River.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

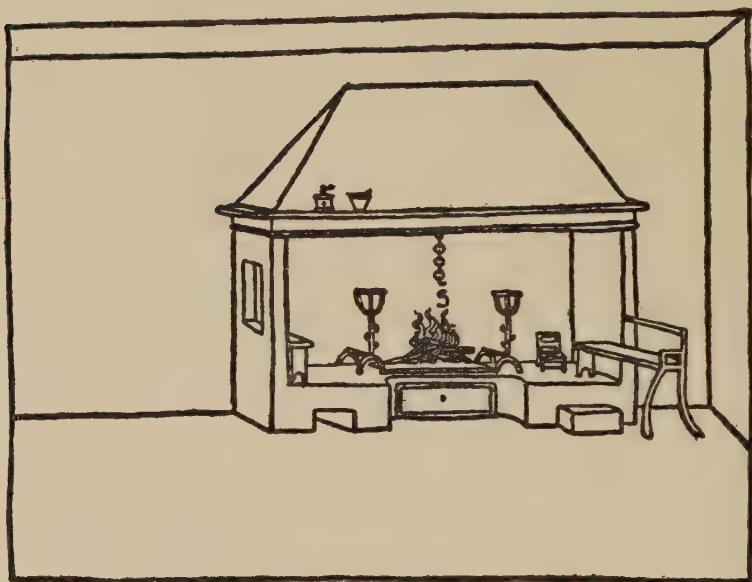
piazza I noticed that the floor of it was entirely irregular as it followed the outline of the rock it covered, furthermore it was bounded by a solid parapet with no openings for drainage during the winter rains, therefore it must become a shallow lake. As underneath this floor the rock, somewhat porous, was hollowed out for dwellings, the consequences seemed inevitable.

"Does not the water percolate through to the rooms below?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, but we place large basins under the leaks," said he contentedly.

As we descended and threaded the streets toward the castle we looked into the church but did not linger for it was uninteresting and disgracefully dirty. Farther on I stopped for a moment before an open door, noticing within a typical example of the *focolare*, the important hearthstone and centre of the Italian home. A pleasant-faced woman came forward and I praised it. She begged me to enter. "We are poor, very poor, Signora, but you are welcome to come in if there is anything here to see." It was a neat little place, a model of condensed housekeeping, the *focolare*, the bed and the dining table were all present but as well disposed as might be for space. I stopped to look from her window, for to stand there was to poise like a bird in mid air; the wall of her house met the edge of a cliff, a hundred feet below shone the river, and above and beyond lay such beauty as to glorify the most meagre dwelling. She eagerly indicated points of interest and, as is the custom, we united in agreeing that the fresh air afforded by this position was unparalleled. As to the *focolare*, we discussed its completeness. It was deep, it was wide, several members of the family could sit in it most comfortably; besides the usual bench on the left there was upon the right a wider seat with a back and this had been extended into the room and, by means of short

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY



THE "FOCOLARE"

legs within and long, well-spread ones without, was admirably firm. The tops of the andirons were fashioned into baskets to hold sauce-pans, and below the hearth a large drawer for keeping food hot could be pulled out; last touch of all was a little window cut through the chimney toward the best light. Each contrivance was explained with pride to my appreciative attention and then we parted with the amenities proper to the occasion. Her speech was charming and she had all the ready and courteous friendliness of the best Tuscan peasantry. These wayside acquaintanceships are so pleasant that one would like them to be less brief.

The castle of Sorano surmounts a splendid ledge more than a hundred feet above the town. To explore and understand it, it is well to begin at the south portal which

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

bears above it the grandiose coat of arms, florid but beautiful, that combines the Aldobrandeschi lion with the Orsini rose. Outside it is a deep moat now lined with grass and shrubbery so that you may see the fine outward curve of the foundation once concealed by water, carved out of the solid rock for a height of some fifteen feet and enriched with a heavy moulding where the stone block construction begins while the castle, accommodating itself to the outline of the summit it stands on, fills it by throwing out two sharp-angled bastions to the right and left of the entrance. Before you is the bridge across the moat, once a drawbridge, and above it the protecting tower. With its mighty bulk aloft there, planted upon the living rock, and its prodigious walls, it looks like what it is, a splendid survival of that old feudal power that lingered so much longer here in the Maremma than anywhere else in Italy. Small wonder that it was looked upon by the Medici as one of the most desirable fortresses of the south and that it was called "the sulphur match of the Tuscan wars." As I stood gazing at it and thinking about its fearsome past, I saw the head of a donkey emerge upon my side of the moat. With a last effort he brought himself and his burden over the edge and stood still to rest. He bore a small mountain of green grass securely lashed to a pack saddle and behind him walked a stalwart, handsome old woman. We saluted and I, still under the spell of the sixteenth century, began to praise what was before us. She frowned and glancing disdainfully about her said:

"But what a miserably ugly place is Sorano, Signora!"

"How can you think so?" I exclaimed, "I admire it greatly."

Scornfully she replied: "It is ugly. I was not born here, not I. I was born in Montepulciano," and with a slight inclination she urged on her donkey and left me as

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

one of too low standards to be conversationally worth while.

Feeling rebuked yet clinging to my own opinion I crossed the bridge and passed through the first gate, for there are two here with a big barrel-vaulted chamber between. In the ceiling of the latter is a convenient opening for pouring boiling oil or melted lead upon the heads of the unwelcome. Through the second gate one comes out upon the first courtyard and observes how well defended was the fortress of Sorano, for beyond this lies another moat, another drawbridge, and another tower.



A STREET IN SORANO



Sorano. Portal of the Castle.

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

This central tower is the oldest and looks its age. From the slits in it the scowling face of Niccolò IV must often have looked down. In the ferocious struggles he kept up successively with his father, his brother, and his son, Sorano was the lair he sought when he met disaster. In this fortress, garrisoned and provisioned, he could wait, chafing and furious, while he malignantly plotted the future. Opening on this second court-yard, which is of great size, were the dwelling quarters, and though many changes have taken place one can still find here a graceful balcony, there a bit of fine arcade leading to one of the stately staircases that Niccolò, who was a great builder, was fond of. At the top of one of these there still remains a door with beautiful mouldings, above which his name is carved. The municipal hospital occupies space here and also a showy palazzo in glaring contrast with the antiquity about it, which causes one to sigh that the modern owner cared so little to harmonize his building with that of the past.

Passing on we reach the side of the castle which commands the town and again are amazed at new and vast spaces. A numerous garrison could be housed here, such as the turbulent Orsini needed, and one smiles to see that not a point was left unguarded, a precaution well taken by those bears' whelps, for whatever threatened from without, there was the ever-present danger that their own townsfolk, tormented beyond the point of endurance, might rise up against them. Thus on this side there are three portals well gated and with the advantage of steepness between, for from the last of these there descends the precipitous ramp which zigzags by steps and inclined planes to the level of the town far below. The vast wall spaces of this facade are finely weathered, a few small modern windows pierce them but inconspicuously, bits of marble have been irregularly inserted in the tufa, and tufts and fringes of

BYWAYS IN SOUTHERN TUSCANY

wild growth decorate the whole. As I think of the beauty of it and the memories it is rich in, my thoughts persistently revert to gentle Lorenzina because after I had discovered her secret desire the clouds would not lift, the rain never ceased to fall, and I was obliged to take leave without affording her the enriching experience of a visit to Sorano. Fortunately she knows not that she came even so near to achieving her ambition, but in my mind it remains as a liability, a lien upon the future.



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INDEX

INDEX

- Abbazia San Salvatore, 127, 128;
 141 to 150
 Abbazia Spineta, 129, 219
 Accesa, 153
 Adimari, Gianozzo degli, 247
 Adrian IV, Pope, 128
 Agostini, Rosata, 260
 Aldobrandeschi, 12, 30, 36, 37, 66,
 72, 81; 122 to 125; 151, 167, 238,
 241, 246, 247, 254, 258, 259, 281;
 Aldobrandino, il Conte Rosso, 246
 to 248; 259; Guglielmo, 81, 85,
 259; Margherita, 246 to 250; 259;
 Omberto, 81 to 85
 Aldobrandino di Bonifazio, 259; il
 Conte Rosso. See Aldobrandeschi
 Alvaro de Sandé, 116
 Amasia, 39, 41, 44
 Amorsa, 196
 Anastasia, 259
 Andrea di Niccolo, 89
 Angelis, Luigi De, 194 to 196; 199
 Angevins, 247
 Ansedonia, 51
 Ansuini, 55
 Antonino, Fra, 226
 Antonio, Fra, 138
 Arcidosso, 145, 150; 158 to 167; 168
 Ardengheschi, 12, 30, 87, 173
 Areodeno of the Red Beard, 46
 Arezzo, 185, 188, 196, 222, 231;
 Bishop of, 225
 Argonaut, Telamon, 45
 Aristotle, 195
 Arno, 172, 207
 Asciano, 222, 225
 Assisi, 196
 Asso valley, 97
 Astrona valley, 210
 Aurelian, 244
 Avignon, 139
 Azzo of Grosseto, 247
 Badia a Spineta, 129, 219
 Baglione, Adriano, 201, 292; Guc-
 cio di, 135 to 137
 Bagnolo, 156
 Baicche, 93, 94
 Bajazet, 39
 Baldassare Peruzzi, 197
 Barbarossa, 128
 Bargagli, 20
 Bargagli Petrucci, 194
 Bartolo di Fredi, 86, 89, 123, 190
 Bartolommeo da Miragna, 231
 Barzellotti, 145
 Basil, 59, 60
 Beccati Quello, 207
 Beccati Questo, 207
 Belforte, 6
 Bella Marsilia, 37 to 45
 Benevento, 247; Girolamo di, 97,
 240
 Bentivoglio, 110, 113
 Berardenga, 183, 222, 225
 Berardo, 222

INDEX

- Biagini, 55, 57, 59, 60
 Binduccio, 250
 Biondino, 179
 Boccaccio, 30, 130, 199
 Bocchegiano, 7
 Boniface VIII, Pope, 199
 Bonizella, Beata, 231 to 233
 Borbone, 145
 Borghese, 202
 Bostichi, 171
 Bourgogne, Countess of, 134, 135
 Brescia, 260
 Brigata Godereccia, 227, 228
 Bruscalupi, 260
 Buonconvento, 95, 114
 Burana, 51

 Cacciaconti, 200, 222, 225, 226, 227, 228, 231
 Cacciaguerra, 225
 Campagnatico, 81 to 86; 125
 Campiglia d'Orcia, 126, 218
 Campiglia Marittima, 29, 31
 Cangenova Salimbeni, 20
 Capalbio, 51, 63, 74
 Capraja, 173
 Casentino, 70
 Castel del Piano, 167
 Castello di Notte, 173; di Pietra, 24 to 27; 32; Monteregio, 11
 Castiglion-Bernardi, 32
 Castiglione della Pescaja, 31 to 35; d'Orcia, 115; 121 to 125
 Castro, 55, 56
 Castruccio, 88
 Cavallotti, 9
 Celestine II, Pope, 127; III, Pope, 259
 Cellere, 54, 63
 Centorio, 37, 44
 Cesarini, 150, 154

 Cetona, 121, 125, 210, 215, 216
 Charles V, 102, 103, 109, 116, 260, 265
 Charles of Anjou, 246, 248, 249
 Chartri, Maria de, 135 to 137
 Chateau Cambresis, 132
 Checco Bello, 67, 68
 Chiana. See Val
 Chianciano, 204, 205, 206
 Chiappino, Vitelli, 131, 132
 Chiusi, 142, 180, 194, 196, 205; 206 to 210; 218
 Chiusidino, 4, 5, 6, 16
 Ciampoli, 164
 Città della Pieve, 208
 Civitavecchia, 29
 Clement IV, Pope, 248
 Cluny, Abbot of, 199
 Cola di Rienzo, 138
 Colle, 247
 Collechio, 36, 37, 38
 Colonna, 32
 Company of the Hat, 198
 Constantinople, 39, 45
 Conte Rosso, 246 to 249; 259
 Corsini, 52
 Cortona, 212
 Cosimo I, 16, 20, 88, 102, 109, 114, 115, 116, 120, 124, 125, 131, 132, 133, 188, 191, 193, 229; 267 to 270
 Cosimo II, 162, 163
 Cosimo III, 149
 Cozarelli, 89

 Daniele, 139
 Dante, 26, 81, 85, 151, 196, 227, 259
 David Lazzaretti, 145, 161
 David of Sovana, 247
 Decameron, 130

INDEX

- Dennis, 47, 206, 209
 Diocletian, 181
- Ebreina, 146 to 149
 Elba, 7
 Ensamples of Fra Filippo, 259
 Etruria, 210, 225
 Etruscan columbaria, 277; tombs, 209, 210, 212
- Fanelli, 211
 Farnese, 56; Duke, 270; Prince, 269
 Fighine, 216, 217
 Filippo, Fra, Ensamples, 259
 Fioravanti, 55, 62, 63
 Forsythe, 220
 Fratta, 196
 Frederic II, 241
 Fucini, 28
 Fungai, 190
- Galleti, Gino, 150
 Garfagnana, 173
 Garzia di Toledo, 103, 104, 107, 108, 125, 201
 Ghino di Tacco, 130, 199
 Ghinozzo of Sassoforte, 151 to 154
 Giacomo, Fra, 195
 Gian Francesco, 260 to 269
 Giannino, Il Re, 134 to 140
 Gianozzo degli Adimari, 247
 Gigli, 136
 Giordano, 104, 106
 Giotto, 196
 Giovanni di Paolo, 231
 Girolamo di Benevento, 97, 240
 Gisle, 225
 Gregory IV, Pope, 11; VII, Pope, 244
- Grosseto, 28, 31, 34, 51, 74, 81, 142, 167, 173, 247, 258
 Guidoriccio da Fogliano, 88
 Guise, Duke of, 117, 120
- Hat, Company of the, 198
 Henry II, 109, 115; III, 246, 248; Prince, 248, 249
 Hildebrand (Gregory VII), 244
 Hills of the Wind, 51
 Horace, 217
- I. H. S., 10
 Ildibrandino Cacciante, 225
 Ildibrandino of Montisi, 227
 Innocent VI, Pope, 139; X, Pope, 55
 Ipolito Tolomei, 20
 Isabella Orsini, 269
 Istia d'Ombone, 74, 81
- †
- Janizaries, 39 to 43
 Jeanne of France, 134, 137
 Joanna, Queen, 141
- Ladislao, King of Naples, 130
 Lazzaretti, Davide, 145, 161
 Leopoldo I of Tuscany, 31, 33, 85, 211
 Lippo Memmi, 123
 Lodovico of Hungary, 139
 Lorenzetti, 123, 183
 Louis X, 134
 Lucignano, 180; 187 to 192; 193
 Ludovico, Emperor, 88
 Luigi de Angelis, 194, 195, 196, 199
- Magliano, 65 to 70; 153; Piombo of, 66
 Malavolti, 124
 Manciano, 55, 167, 234, 235

INDEX

- Manente, 205, 211, 212, 214
 Manfred, 100, 247
 Marciano, 109, 180; 191 to 193
 Maremma, 28 to 31; 47 to 49
 Margherita Aldobrandeschi, 246 to 250; 259
 Marignano, 88, 109, 112; 191 to 193
 Marius, 238
 Marruca, 30
 Marsili, 36 to 39; 45; Nanni, 38
 Martini, Simone, 88
 Martinozzi, 230
 Massa Marittima, 4; 7 to 17; 46, 250
 Massaini, Palazzo, 200
 Medici, 116, 132, 148, 149, 194, 229; 235; 267 to 271; 281. See Cosimo
 Memmi, Lippo, 123
 Mendoza, 102
 Menichetti, 55, 57
 Minucci, 72
 Mirandola, Count of, 193
 Mohammed, 39; the Conqueror, 38
 Mojane Castle, 219 to 222
 Monluc, Blaise de, 109 to 120; 192
 Montalcino, 95 to 120; 121, 131, 132, 193
 Montaperti, 100, 101, 102, 123, 129, 180, 181, 247, 259
 Montarrente, 4
 Montauto, 234
 Monte Amiata, 70, 74, 97, 115, 121, 122, 125, 141, 149, 150, 161, 166, 167, 203, 246, 258, 263
 Monte Argentario, 46, 49, 50, 51, 67
 Monte Cetona, 205, 208, 217
 Montefollonico, 196, 222, 223, 224
 Monte Labbro, 161
 Monte Leone, 125
 Montelifrè, 222, 229, 230
 Montemassi, 24, 88
 Montemerano, 235 to 238
 Montepulciano, 119, 121, 124, 194, 196, 197, 205, 208, 281
 Monte Vitozzo, 259, 263, 267, 270
 Montfort, Guy de, 246 to 249; Simon de, 246
 Montiano, 153; Poggio di, 36
 Montichiello, 200 to 204
 Monticiano, 6
 Montisi, 222; 224 to 227; 229
 Naples, 51, 108, 149; King Ladislao, 130
 Napoleon, 51, 219
 Neroccio di Landi, 68, 184, 224, 228
 Niccolo III, IV. See Orsini
 Nicholas III, Pope, 259
 Nicolosi, 236, 246
 Onano, Duke of, 163, 164
 Orbetello, 31, 46; 49 to 51; 52, 67, 234
 Orcia. See River, Val
 Orsini, 198; 253 to 270; 273, 275, 276, 281, 283; Alessandro, 270, 271; Ceccolo, 198; Celestine III, Pope, 259; Gian Francesco, 260 to 269; Giovanni, 259; Isabella, 269; Niccolo III, Count, 254, 260, 262; Niccolo IV, Count, 260 to 270; 283; Nicholas III, Pope, 259; Orso, 260; 268 to 270; Romano, 259, 260
 Orvieto, 81, 205, 220
 Osservanti, 97
 Otto, Emperor, 87
 Otto IV, Emperor, 128, 227

INDEX

- Paganico, 81; 86 to 94; 125
 Palazzo Massaini, 200
 Palmieri, 28
 Pannocchieschi, 5, 12, 13, 30; Ilde-
 brando, 5; Nello, 26, 27, 73,
 250
 Pecci, 125, 228
 Pecorai, 199
 Pelagone, 234
 Pereta, 70 to 74
 Peri, 161 to 165
 Perugia, 188, 197, 207
 Peruzzi, Baldassare, 197
 Pesa, 100. See River, Val
 Petriolo, 196
 Petrocchi, Luigi, 15
 Petrucci, F. Bargagli, 194
 Philip II, 116
 Philip V, 134, 137
 Pia Tolomei, 26, 27, 73
 Piancastagnajo, 143 to 150; 157
 Piazze, Le, 216
 Piccinino, 46, 235
 Piccolomini, 125, 232, 273
 Pienza, 116 to 120; 125, 196, 200,
 201, 203, 222
 Piero Cento-Scudi, 212
 Piombo of Magliano, 66
 Pisa, 13
 Pistoiese, 48, 70
 Pitigliano, 241, 249; 252 to 275;
 276, 277
 Pitiglio, 258
 Pius II, 130
 Pliny, 241
 Poggi di Montiano, 36
 Poggio Santa Cecilia, 184; 185;
 Strozzone, 270
 Port Ercole, 51
 Prata, 7
 Provence, 140
 Radicofani, 121; 125 to 134; 141,
 203, 213, 218, 219
 Ranieri, 48; 222
 Rapolano, 180, 183, 184, 185
 Re Giannino, 134 to 140
 Redi, 193
 Repetti, 29, 46, 97, 187, 201, 241,
 251
 Rienzo, Cola di, 138
 Ripa d'Orcia, 122, 178
 River, Albegna, 46 to 51; 70, 74,
 79, 259; Arbia, 100, 180, 182, 191;
 Arno, 207; Astrona, 210; Bruna,
 27, 32; Castrione, 71; Fiora, 51,
 253; Guecenna, 220; Iris, 41;
 Lente, 253, 274, 277; Magra, 29;
 Melata, 253; Merse, 4, 6, 172;
 Ombrone, 35, 36, 70, 74, 81, 86,
 93, 97, 122, 172; Orcia, 121 to
 125; 141; Osa, 35; Paglia, 131,
 141, 213; Prochio, 263, 269, 274;
 Santa Fiora, 51, 253; Scanna-
 gallo, 191; Tiber, 141, 207, 260;
 Tresa, 200; Ucellina, 36
 Robbia, della, 74, 133, 154; Andrea,
 97
 Rocca d'Orcia, 122, 124, 125
 Rocca Tintinnano, 122, 124, 125
 Roccaccia, 55
 Roccalbegna, 74 to 79
 Roccastrada, 16; 22 to 24
 Roccatederighi, 16; 18 to 22
 Rocchette di Fazio, 79 to 81
 Rome, 48, 63, 110, 123, 138, 164,
 196, 207, 246, 258, 260, 269
 Rosata Agostini, 260
 Rossa, La, 37 to 45
 Rosso, Il Conte, 246 to 249; 259
 Roxelana, 38 to 45
 Ruggiero di Loria, 249
 Rustum Pacha, 40, 42, 43

INDEX

- Saint Ansano, 180 to 183; Brandano, 10; David, 161; Galgano, 5, 6; Mamiliano, 244; Satan, 244
 Salimbeni, 19, 20, 124
 San Ansano, 180 to 183; Antimo, 95, 96, 98; Bernardino, 250; Bruzio, 69; Casciano de' Bagni, 217, 218; Galgano, 4, 5, 172; Gimignanello, 185 to 187; Giovanni d'Asso, 222, 223; Robano, 37; Salvatore, Abbadia, 127, 128, 141 to 150
 Sandé, Alvaro de, 116
 Sano di Pietro, 236
 Santa Cecilia, Poggio, 184, 185; Fiora, 72, 145; 150 to 157; 158, 167; Fiora, Counts of, 23, 167, 258, 259
 Saraceni stemma, 204
 Saracens, 29, 234, 238
 Sardinia, 29
 Sarteano, 210 to 214; 215, 218
 Sassetta, 6
 Sassoforte, 152; Ghinozzo of, 151 to 154
 Saturnia, 238 to 240; 258
 Scannagallo, 191, 193, 194
 Scansano, 74, 167
 Scarlino, 31
 Scerpenna, 234
 Scialenga, 185, 186
 Selim, 39, 45
 Selvi, Ser Fabritio, 145
 Semifonte, 98
 Seneca, 195
 Sforza, 154
 Shepherds of Maremma, 47 to 49
 Sighele, 53
 Signorelli, 190
 Simone Martini, 88
 Sinalunga, 180
 Singing of May, 155
 Sorano, 256, 259, 262; 265 to 270; 275; 276 to 284
 Sovana (Suana), 241 to 251; 258
 Sozzini, 193
 Spadacorta, 225
 Spadalunga, 225
 Spanish Presidio, 47, 50
 Spannocchi, 110, 112, 113
 Spedaletto, 127
 Stagira, 195
 Strozzi, 109, 114; 162; 191 to 194
 Suana, 241. See Sovana
 Suleiman I, 38 to 44
 Sulla, 238
 Tacco, Ghino di, 199
 Talamone, 45, 46, 67
 Tederighi, 19
 Telamon the Argonaut, 45
 Tiburzi, 51; 52 to 64
 Tintinnano, Counts of, 124; Rocca, 122, 124
 Toledo, Garzia di. See Garzia
 Tolomei, 19, 135, 137, 138; Ipolito, 20; Pia, 26, 27, 73
 Tornaquinci, 181
 Torrita, 180; 194 to 199
 Tosco, Il Gran, 81, 259, 281
 Totila, 207
 Trasimeno, 222
 Trebbiano wine, 193
 Trequanda, 222; 230 to 234
 Triana, 167 to 171
 Tri-Tri, 177 to 179
 Tyrrhennian Sea, 3
 Uberti, Fazio degli, 196
 Ucellina, 35, 36, 37, 45
 Umberto, King, 32
 Urbino, Duke of, 198

INDEX

- Val d'Arno, 172; d'Asso, 97; d'As-
trona, 210; di Chiana, 115, 179,
187, 194, 196, 197, 199, 204, 212,
217, 219, 223; d'Elsa, 172; di
Merse, 172, 173; d'Ombrore, 97;
d'Orcia, 97; 121 to 126; 219, 223;
di Paglia, 144, 200, 213; di Pesa,
100, 173, 181
Vecchietta, 123
Venice, 139, 260
Vescovo, 125
Vetulonia, 31, 32, 66
Via Aurelia, 34
Via Francigena, 98, 123, 259
Villani, 99
Vinta, Francesco, 268
Violante, 185
Visconti, 30, 126, 218
Vitelli, Chiappino, 131, 132
Viterbo, 54, 63, 248
Volterra, 94; Bishop of, 5
Zeangiro, 39, 43



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